THE MIND OF THE SAINTS

C. V. TRENT

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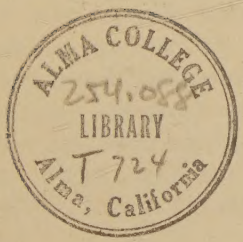
By C. V. Trent

With a Preface by the Editor of
"The Sower"



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PREFACE

THERE is a good deal of work to be done before Catholicism, so long obscured by that cloudy settling dust which is the Dead Sea fruit of controversy, can become once more intelligible and desirable to the generation now living. It is because I think the present book does something useful towards this end that I venture to recommend it to all who care about the conversion of England, or indeed of anywhere else.

One criticism of the book might be that the quotations in it from other writers are both numerous and long; but there is a purpose in this. In the very important matters with which these chapters deal, every Catholic prefers to rest his mind as far as possible on the expressed judgement of the experienced and the wise; and the many writers here quoted do, in fact, attain—are here shown to attain—to a kind of consensus which ordinary people, whether Catholics or non-Catholics, may easily recognize as being solid ground.

Most of these essays have appeared in an educational journal called *The Sower,* and it is for that reason, as its editor, that I have been asked to write this preface. But if they have proved of deep interest —as I can testify that they have—to many engaged in teaching, and especially to those who have consecrated their whole lives to that vocation, I think that they will

be no less interesting to many others, religious or lay, who in numberless different ways are caught by the passion for working with God, and are living out day by day the things for which this book has tried to find words.

F. H. DRINKWATER.

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THE MIND OF THE SAINTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: CHRIST AND THE SAINTS

"*CARDINAL NEWMAN wrote in his liveliest controversial work a sentence that might be a model of what we mean by saying that his creed tends to lucidity and logical courage. In speaking of the ease with which truth may be made to look like its own shadow or sham, he said: 'And if Antichrist is like Christ, Christ, I suppose, is like Antichrist.' . . . It may give a much milder shock if I say here, what most of us have forgotten, that if St Francis was like Christ, Christ was, to that extent, like St Francis. And my present point is that it is really very enlightening to realize that Christ was like St Francis. . . . Even those who are puzzled at the saying of Christ would hardly pause in accepting it as a saying of St Francis. Nobody would be surprised to find that he had said: 'I beseech you, little brothers, that you be as wise as Brother Daisy and Brother Dandelion; for never do they lie awake thinking of to-morrow, yet they have gold crowns like kings and emperors or like Charlemagne in all his glory.'*"*

* *St Francis of Assisi,* by G. K. Chesterton, pp. 134, 137.

That Christ may literally be seen in his saints is one of those basic, underlying truths upon which all St Paul's doctrine is built; that was so clear to the saints themselves that it made them almost impossibly audacious and almost unreasonably humble; and that has always been tacitly understood as the theological explanation of sanctity. It took, however, a mind like Chesterton's to put it into the everyday language which makes truth so much more recognizable than the Sunday clothes of conventional reverentiality. And it is appropriate that the truth should be brought forward in connection with St Francis, because his likeness to Christ has God's seal upon it—imprinted in his hands and feet and side.

The chief point for us in this great truth about the similarity between Christ and his saints is that it gives us the main motive for studying their lives and personalities. It is what the Church has always felt; but, like many of the most precious thoughts of the Church, it has not always been sufficiently remembered by the faithful. From time to time it gets expressed in connection with one revival or another. For instance, Guéranger, wishing to emphasize the importance of the Liturgy for lay-folk, made it one of his arguments in the Introduction to his *Liturgical Year:*

"In this work we shall lay great stress on the cultus of the saints, inasmuch as it is always needed, but now more than ever. Devotion to the adorable person of our Saviour has revived among us with a vigorous development; devotion to our Blessed Lady has wonderfully spread and increased; let the saints also receive our honour and our confidence, and then the last traces of the unhappy spirit produced by Jansenism

will disappear. . . . Is not the formation of Christ within us the result of our uniting in his various mysteries, the joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious? These mysteries of Jesus come into us, are incorporated with us each year, by the special grâce which the Liturgy produces by communicating them to us: the new man gradually grows up, even on the ruins of the old. Then again, in order that the divine type may the more easily be stamped upon us, we need examples; we need to see how our fellow-men have realized this type in themselves; and the Liturgy does this for us, by offering us the practical teaching and the encouragement of our dear saints who shine like stars in the firmament of the Church's year. By dint of looking upon them we come to learn the way which leads to Jesus, just as Jesus is our way which leads to the Father."

Probably when Guéranger wrote, the Liturgy was, indeed, the best way of getting to know the saints—and it will always be a good way. The Communion of Saints is a mystical idea. To have grasped it is to have got outside the cumbersome idea of *time,* into the feeling of eternity; to have realized the perpetual youth of the Church. Perhaps there is nothing like the Divine Office to awaken this sense of the living Communion of Saints that bridges time, or rather melts it away to nothing. All through her Liturgy the Church never forgets the mystical *fact* of the saints any more than she forgets the fact of the cross. St Thomas, in the *Secunda Secundae,* has put it thus:

"The saints are said to pray for us in two ways: firstly, by express prayer, when they, by their ardent

desires, appeal to the ears of the divine mercy for us; secondly, by interpretative prayer—namely, by their merits which, standing as the saints do in the sight of God, not only tend to their own glory, but are, as it were, suffrages—and even prayers—for us; just as the blood of Christ, shed for us, is said to ask pardon for us."

But the liturgical is essentially the mystical way of getting to know the saints. It was almost the only way in Guéranger's time, because there were no proper books about the saints—at least, in the way of modern hagiography. There were, of course, the autobiographical records of the early saints; and books like the *Fioretti* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*—books exhaling the very fragrance of the simple saints they tell about with such innocent delight and admiration; and St Teresa's *Life* by herself, and a few others. But the ordinary stuff meted out to the laity or read aloud to unfortunate novices was very sorry stuff indeed. And its effect is still with us. It is the cold, formal, staid way of talking about the saints which prevailed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that has turned them, for many of us, into a kind of sanctified Madame Tussaud's, instead of letting us see them as the very live men and women they really were.

One of the vital uses of the saints in the Catholic Church is as examples: not examples of a mild piety, of a dutiful plodding along the way of life; any mediocre Christian does for that. The saints are examples of something burning, tremendous; examples meant to set us on fire, so that—even if we cannot bear to burn long with quite that intensity—

the afterglow will make us act more nobly, more bravely than before. Writing of the ages of the saints, Chesterton says: "By defining its main doctrine the Church not only kept seemingly inconsistent things side by side, but, what was more, allowed them to break out in a sort of artistic violence otherwise possible only to anarchists. Meekness grew more dramatic than madness. Historic Christianity rose into a high and strange *coup de théâtre* of morality—things that are to virtue what the crimes of Nero are to vice. The spirits of indignation and of charity took terrible and attractive forms, ranging from that monkish fierceness that scourged like a dog the first and greatest of the Plantagenets, to the sublime piety of St Catherine, who, in the official shambles, kissed the bloody head of the criminal. Poetry could be acted as well as composed. This heroic and monumental manner in ethics has entirely vanished with supernatural religion. They, being humble, could parade themselves; we are too proud to be prominent."*

But, as we have said, they are more than examples, they are "mirrors of Christ," and we must be grateful to the modern writers like Fr. Martindale, Francis Thompson, Fr. Cuthbert, Mgr. Benson, Fr. Bede Jarrett, and G. K. Chesterton, who have set about showing us the saints by studies of their lives written on sound historical and psychological lines, and lit up by an imaginative sympathy that seems to make the personality live again. Like Guinevere, we needs must love the highest when we see it, and in the new-style hagiography we really do see the saints, and love

* *Orthodoxy*, pp. 175-6.

them; and we really do begin to see Christ's face in them.

But properly to understand the lives of the saints, we really need some understanding of those ascetical ideas that played such a large part in their thoughts. We do not mean that it is necessary to study ascetical theology: but simply that the reader ought to have an every-day, working idea of what words like "detachment" really mean; what place the Church really gives mortification in the spiritual life; how far supernatural motives take the place of ordinary thinking and feeling; and so on.

Perhaps we shall sound as if we are arguing in a circle when we say that the best way to understand asceticism is to see it actually at work in the saints. The fact is, they explain each other: which is the whole point of this little book.

But before concluding our introductory chapter, there is one more point we should like to touch on. It is this. That it was not simply ascetical counsels of perfection deliberately aimed at that made these men and women saints—made them like Christ. How was it that they grew so like Christ that we can truthfully say Christ must be to that extent like *them?* We have not dealt with the point elsewhere in these chapters. Indeed, it is so simple that it does not need thrashing out and talking round. They grew like Christ through contact with Christ. By baptism they were "joined to holiness," as that beautiful eulogy of Christ at the blessing of the paschal candle expresses it; and all through their lives the union became closer. It is a law of psychology that people grow like those they love. A set of children faithfully reflect an elder

whom they really love and follow. Husband and wife often grow alike. Above all, the disciple makes his own the characteristics of his beloved master. The only way to get any real comprehension of the saints is to try and understand their attitude towards Christ our Lord. Perhaps nowhere has this been so perfectly described as by Abbot Vonier in *The Personality of Christ*. We cannot do better than conclude with this quotation :

" We find in Christian spirituality the double phenomena of Christ being present with us, filling our hearts with his love, and of that kind of yearning for the absent friend whom we hope to find in heaven. No more incomplete view of Christianity could be given than to define it as a striving after a Christ who lives in the heavenly world. Christianity is life with Christ here on earth, and where highest sanctity has flourished, there has been the greatest actual presence of our Lord.

" . . . Catholicism . . . is an effort at human spirituality, at human sanctity, at a perfection to be acquired here, in life. Its eternal results are not indeed indifferent to the saint; they are of the utmost importance to him, as his sanctification is essentially the perfection of his own immortal, never-dying soul. But it may be asserted quite safely that even with the greatest saint the thought of his going to heaven is only one of many thoughts kept in its proper place by the more urgent and more active thoughts of doing the deeds of charity, of finding Christ in his own heart, of speaking with him, and of being happy in his company. . . . The unsatisfied craving of highest Christian sanctity is not so much of finding him, as of

seeing him, because sanctity has found him already, but being of this world it has not seen him yet.

". . . It may be said that every stage of sanctity has a realization of Christ's presence that gives it there and then entire satisfaction."*

* pp. 243-246.

CHAPTER II

MOTIVE

"*SOME have understood God to work in every agent in such a way that no created power has any effect in things, but that God alone is the immediate cause of everything wrought; for instance, that it is not fire that gives heat, but God in the fire, and so forth. But this is impossible. First, because the order of cause and effect would be taken away from created things; and this would imply lack of power in the Creator, for it is due to the power of the cause that it bestows active power on its effect. Secondly, because the active powers which are seen to exist in things would be bestowed on things to no purpose if these wrought nothing through them. Indeed, all things created would seem, in a way, to be purposeless, if they lacked an operation proper to them, since the purpose of everything is its operation. . . . We must therefore understand that God works in things in such a manner that things have their proper operation*" (*St Thomas,* Summa, *I, Q. CV, Art.* 5).

"*The Son of God assumed a perfect human nature. Now the will pertains to the perfection of human nature, being one of its natural powers, as the intellect. Hence we must say that the Son of God assumed a human will together with human nature. . . . Hence*

it must be said that there are two wills in Christ—one human, the other divine.

" Whatever was in the human nature of Christ was moved at the bidding of the divine will; yet it does not follow that in Christ there was no movement of the will proper to human nature, for the good wills of other saints are moved by God's will, ' who worketh ' in them ' both to will and to accomplish ' " (Summa, *III, Q. XVIII, Art.* 1).

We have placed these extracts from St Thomas at the head of this chapter, not because we suppose anyone thinks that the saints were moved by God independently of their own volitions, but because in answering this supposition, St Thomas has laid down a few philosophical and psychological principles that are useful in our study of the saints, especially when we ask ourselves how far the ordinary motives of our human nature affected their actions.

Now, although the hagiographers would not have claimed that " it is not the fire that gives heat, but God in the fire," or suggested that God ever short-circuits the law of cause and effect which he has himself created, they do not hesitate to explain away much that would make the saints loveable and keep them within our reach. By doing this, they are defeating their own pious purpose of edifying their readers; they are not playing fair by the saint; and they are bordering on the proposition which St Thomas so briefly dismisses with his characteristic phrase: " But this is impossible."

Also, since Christ explains the saints, and the saints help us to understand Christ, any confused thinking about this point is sure to involve confused thinking

about the Incarnation; and anything which lessens the reality of Christ's human life, in our thoughts, is a spiritual loss.

CARDINAL NEWMAN ON THE HAGIOGRAPHERS

"It is bad art readily and confidently to explain the meaning and motive of the actions of the men we are depicting," wrote the late Wilfrid Ward. "Neither actors nor onlookers are fully aware of the meaning or motive of many an action. Cardinal Newman has written an amusing page on this defect in reference mainly to some of the better-known lives of the Catholic saints."*

Here is Newman's amusing page:

"What I want to trace and study is the real, hidden but human, life, or the *interior*, as it is called, of such glorious creatures of God [the saints]; and this I gain with difficulty from mere biographies. These biographies are most valuable both as being true and as being edifying; they are true to the letter, as far as they record facts and acts, I know it: but actions are not enough for sanctity; we must have saintly motives; and as to these motives, the actions themselves seldom carry the motives along with them. In consequence, they are often supplied simply by the biographer out of his own head; and with good reason supplied, from the certainty which he feels that, since it is the act of a saint which he is describing, therefore it must be a saintly act. . . . For instance, when I read in such a life: 'The saint, when asked a question, was silent through humility,' or 'from compassion for

* *Last Lectures*, p. 154.

the ignorance of the speaker,' or ' in order to give him a gentle rebuke,' I find a motive assigned, whichever of the three is selected, which is the biographer's own, and perhaps has two chances to one against it being the right one. We read of an occasion on which St Athanasius said nothing, but smiled, when a question was put to him: it was another saint who asked the question, and who has recorded the smile; but he does no more than doubtfully explain it. Many a biographer would, simply out of piety, have pronounced the reason of that smile. I should not blame him for doing so; but it was more than he could do as a biographer: if he did it, he would do it, not as an historian, but as a spiritual writer."*

Wilfrid Ward objected to this habit of the biographers from the literary and artistic point of view; Newman, from devotion and a sort of sympathy with the misrepresented saint, born of his own sensitive self-consciousness. *We* may well object from the point of view of objective truth and good psychology. We know, now, that history cannot be divorced from psychology. To our modern taste edification requires actuality. We like to prove theology from the lives of the saints, rather than prove that the saints had the theological virtues. The medievals piled up details; the eighteenth century added pious platitudes. We, of this century, seek to understand the saint's psychology. Much as we dislike the hagiographer's glib way of assigning motives, still we *do* like to get at the meaning of the saint's action. That, indeed, is the characteristic of our best writers on the saints. There is a great deal to be said for this way, since it

* *Historical Sketches*, vol. ii, pp. 219–220.

certainly makes for truth. But the old hagiographers must turn in their graves at the way many of their pious beliefs are revolutionized by the modern psychologist-biographer! For instance, the old hagiographers have all repeated one after the other, that St Philip, the holy and venerable founder of the Oratory, solemnly set himself to play the fool, that he might hide his sanctity from those about him. Now just listen to the shocking suggestions of M. Joly:

ST PHILIP'S "WHIMSICAL SALLIES"

"His biographers are careful to tell us that these were inventions of his humility, which made him anxious to hide the treasures of holiness and learning which he possessed under a commonplace and almost foolish exterior. Goethe, in this matter, speaks like a regular hagiographer. 'Neri summed up his principal doctrine in a short proverb: Despise the world, despise yourself, and despise being despised. And, as a matter of fact, this is the end of all knowledge. The pessimist often fancies that he has attained the first two points: even to aim at the third anyone must needs have started on the road to sanctity.' I do not deny that there is a deep meaning and great truth in Goethe's words. . . . Still, it is probable enough that Philip was acting, in a measure, according to the dictates of his natural temperament. Why not? On *second thoughts* he may have seen in this tendency of his a means of checking the admiration men felt for him. We may even take that much for granted. But the first impulse must have been involuntary, for, whatever may be said of the love of humiliations indulged in by all the saints, we must

allow that, as a rule, they do not invent such practices as these. . . . Take, for instance, a saint who is subject to abnormal absence of mind, like certain great students. He is glad enough to be laughed at for it, but he will not go and make believe to have distractions. Simplicity is ever a characteristic of the saints, even when raised to the most extraordinary states."*

Already Newman had felt there was something wrong about this rather laboured humility attributed to St Philip's "most amiable, natural, and unpretending self," and though he repeats the old legend of the deliberate follies, he goes even further than Joly in ascribing an ordinary motive for them!

"He did not ask to be opposed, to be maligned, to be persecuted, but simply to be overlooked. . . . And hence you know, when he became so famous in his old age, and everyone was thinking of him mysteriously, and looking at him with awe, and solemnly repeating Fr. Philip's words and rehearsing Fr. Philip's deeds, and bringing strangers to see him, it was the most cruel penance to him, and he was ever behaving himself ridiculously on purpose, and putting them out, from his entire hatred and impatience of being turned into a show."†

Of course this desire to be "overlooked" was no doubt in its origin supernatural. But things of that sort became so much second nature to the saints that St Philip's consistent humility and self-abnegation may be thought of as quite spontaneous, effortless and easy. And this explains a great deal in the saints.

* *Psychologie des Saints* (trans., pp. 59-60).
† *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 231.

When we speak of their "motives," we know, of course, that the one great motive of their life was love of God and desire to "keep the words" of Christ our Lord, and we only mean a sort of secondary motive within this. But perhaps we do not so readily understand that in the saint whole regions of second-rate motive had been practically ruled out, and various new things—like charity and humility and courage and supernatural joy—had become so real a part of him that, as a matter of fact, he is acting normally and spontaneously when he does things that would be deliberately heroic in us. And—further—we must not deprive the saint of being able to act naturally as well as supernaturally! For instance, to quote St Philip again, his love for his dog, Cappricio, was a genuine affection; and the way he sent his disciples to feed the cat who continued to live during six years in his old rooms at San Girolamo is the same sort of eccentricity found in great men and women of the world. And yet the hagiographers explain Cappricio and the cat by turning them into mortifications used by St Philip for the spiritual welfare of his disciples. The real lesson which St Philip taught by means of Cappricio and the cat, was that true humility is just simplicity, and that we must not always seek to hide our little natural impulses and eccentricities. But that is by the way. The point is that by allowing the saints to act from everyday motives as well as from motives of high sanctity, we are in no way derogating from the honour due to them, nor causing disedification to anybody. Quite the contrary, in fact.

To let them have an ordinary everyday motive now and then brings them sufficiently within reach for us

to feel it worth while trying to follow them. According to the old idea, they were a kind of haloed marionettes, with the strings pulled in heaven. Or, if that sounds flippant, then let us say human beings so completely infused with grace that their wills and intellects had become practically those of pure spirits. And that is simply bad psychology. As a matter of fact, the more the Church can show her saints to have been real men and women, the sooner she will be able to get them imitated. And as to the saints themselves, the more spontaneity we allow them, the more we do them justice.

SPONTANEITY

Granted that all the actions of the saints may be said to have been in a general sense supernaturalized by their self-dedication to God's service and their uninterrupted oneness with Christ, there is no reason not to allow these "natural" motives in all sorts of spheres of action. Nor is there any reason to think they always acted deliberately, with reasoned choice. They were most of them ardent sort of people. Probably they acted on impulse very often indeed. And it redounds to their honour that they never seem to have acted selfishly. Of this holy spontaneity of the saints there seems to be a sort of double explanation.

First of all, as we said, the virtues had gradually become second nature to them, and this second nature worked as nature does, with its impulses, quasi-instincts, feelings, spontaneous acts—*e.g.*, admiration *really* made St Philip cross, poverty *really* made St Francis happy, mountains of work *really* made St Vincent de Paul's great heart rejoice. It is because the old hagiographers failed to make this clear that

they so often made the saints seem prigs. Also they made them seem impossibly good—or rather, good in a way impossible to human nature. And sometimes they made us almost mistake their motives altogether. We all know the lovable, simple, spontaneous character of Blessed Thomas More. Knowing this we love the little story of his courtship, for we know it reveals a delicate charity so real that it spontaneously asserted itself above the natural attraction that governs most men's choice of a wife. And yet, if we had to believe he was only actuated by a cold and calculating sense of duty, we could not like the story. Here it is:

At the house of a friend in Essex, More used to enjoy the society of the friend's three daughters. The beauty and gifts of the second one attracted him, and he would have asked for her in marriage, "yet when he thought with himself that this would be a grief and some blemish in the eldest, to see her younger sister preferred before her, he, of a kind of compassion, settled his fancy upon the eldest, and soon after married her with all her friends' good liking."

(We are glad to know that in her he had "a gentle friend and companion," and that "he taught her to become a skilful musician and to increase in love of books for love of him." Also she gave him Margaret, that perfect daughter who was his joy to the end.)

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

But there is another sort of spontaneity in the saints, as well. Often they acted as they did from an impulse natural to their temperaments. With the consent of their will, of course: for they had the sense to realize

that God had given them their temperaments as much as any other part of their nature. They let the best in their temperaments help to build up their sanctity. We see it in every saint; but perhaps St Francis provides the best instance, and Chesterton has dwelt on this a good deal. In those early stories about the boy Francis he sees the clue to many things that happened later. At the end of the first little story he tells, he says: "In this story of the young man in gay garments scampering after the vanishing beggar in rags there are certain notes of his natural individuality that must be assumed from first to last. . . . A certain precipitancy was the very poise of his soul."

We must not, he explains, take these stories as merely "pretty stories" told with a sort of light sentiment. "We must take his real human development somewhat more seriously; and the next story in which we get a real glimpse of it is in a very different setting. But in exactly the same way it opens, as if by accident, certain abysses of the mind and perhaps of the unconscious mind." And after telling the story of Francis' friendliness to the unpopular man in the Perugia prison, and showing its import, he adds: "But though such a seer might have seen such a truth, it is exceedingly doubtful if Francis himself saw it. He had acted out of an unconscious largeness, or in the fine medieval phrase largesse, within himself, something that might almost have been lawless if it had not been reaching out to a more divine law; but it is doubtful whether he yet knew that the law was divine."

And even later, in the days when Francis was consciously living by that divine law—making it the

supreme driving power of his life—this his latest biographer claims that it was in a large measure his native courtesy that won his fellow-men. "What gave him his extraordinary personal power was this: that from the Pope to the beggar, from the Sultan of Syria in his pavilion to the ragged robbers crawling out of the wood, there was never a man who looked into those brown burning eyes without being certain that Francis Bernadone was really interested in *him;* in his own inner individual life from the cradle to the grave; that he himself was being valued and taken seriously, and not merely added to the spoils of some social policy or the names in some clerical document. Now for this particular moral and religious idea there is no external expression except courtesy. . . . No plans or proposals or efficient rearrangements will give back to a broken man his self-respect and sense of speaking with an equal. One gesture will do it.

"With that gesture Francis of Assisi moved among men; and it was soon found to have something in it of magic, and to act, in a double sense, like a charm. But it must always be conceived as a completely natural gesture."

And then there was his native joy in life, his generosity, his poetry and imagination, and much more—all always asserting themselves and being used *ad majorem Dei gloriam,* and helping to make him a saint.

XAVIER'S AMBITION

The native temperament of the saint is supernaturalized; still we should not think of this as happening suddenly and with complete success, as if

by a miracle. An instinct or ruling passion may be renounced in its worldly expressions, and may nevertheless return in pious disguise to find new expressions of a no more useful kind than the other; nor is there any remedy for this, short of honestly and openly enlisting the whole man, ruling passion and all in the service of God.

The problem is seen often in the saints—especially those converted from a worldly life.

Take St Francis Xavier, for instance. Perhaps ambition was his most marked characteristic in his university days—not a hard and proud ambition, but a sort of instinct that it was a point of honour to be a success; a sort of knightly desire for supreme victory in the lists of learning. Ignatius persuaded him it was all profitless compared with serving Christ and saving his soul. He threw it all away, and embraced humility. And a few years later he had turned into the most ambitious missionary the Church has ever possessed!

But long before he had reached this stage of full supernaturalized energy, we find a little incident rather pathetic in its naïveté, with its very natural motive so well disguised as to catch out even so whole-hearted a saint-in-the-making.

Xavier had, before his conversion, taken a great pride in leaping. He evidently felt very contrite about this innocent little vanity, and when the great time came for the journey southward, on foot with his companions, it seemed a good time to punish himself for it. And so before setting out on the long hard march, he tied little cords tightly round those legs of his that had been used to carry him so lightly over

barrier or fosse to the admiration of the onlookers. Soon the long marching made his legs swell, and the agony began. Exultantly he marched on, his desire for heroism getting its satisfaction as the pain increased and all his courage was called forth. And then the little cords began to be embedded in the swollen muscles, but he was too proud to undo them. And finally he was so bad that the expedition had sadly to come to a halt; and the doctor's verdict was still more depressing, for he said the only way would be to cut the cords out of the flesh: and that would be a long job.

Poor Xavier: he probably realized, then, that in punishing the old desire for prowess he had only been venting it under a new form! He had to learn his lesson; but having let him learn it, the divine master was very tender with this ardent disciple: for in the morning the little cords fell away of themselves, and his legs were found perfectly healed, and they all went on, rejoicing over the miracle.

The later ambition is of quite another sort, but none the less enthusiastic and spontaneous. And it has its own explanation. Instead of self as the centre of gravity, there was Christ. This meant all life orientated afresh. There could be ambition, now, with no danger to his soul. "I live, now not I——"

"SUPPLEMENTARY MOTIVE-POWER."

As we have said, the enthusiasms and impulses of the saints were all held within, and subject to, their reasonable choice of God's service. Whether or not they worried themselves over the question of the re-

lationship between these impulses and their "reasonable service" or sense of duty, we don't know. Probably the introspective ones like St Augustine did, and the objective ones like St Francis did not. And what of us, who follow afar off, do we sometimes wonder if our motives are not mere self-seeking, after all? And if we try to think it out, we are apt to get lost in a labyrinth of doubts and puzzles.

Here, then (for the assistance of the perplexed), is the letter of a clear-headed priest to such a questioner.

"In 'motives' and everything else it is better to be conscious than to be unconscious; and I suppose that is what spiritual writers mean when they insist on self-knowledge and examens, etc. They mean 'be fully aware.'

(i) "*In making decisions,* the more conscious one is about all possible motives and influences, the better; and, of course, mere personal feelings should not be allowed to influence decisions at all when the kingdom of God is involved.

(ii) "*In carrying out decisions* already made, one needs all the 'vim' that one can get hold of: the more the better. It is therefore all right to use personal feelings and instincts as supplementary motive-power, so long as they really do help. Also it is all right—better, in fact—to use them *deliberately* and *consciously,* because then there is less danger of their usurping the first place and so influencing *decisions*. Obviously things *do* get done better when people get the whole weight of their feelings behind the job. It's true they are often unconscious of where they get all that motive-power *from;* but that doesn't mean they must renounce it when they become conscious of it.

Else it would be *better* to be unconscious and have no self-knowledge—which would be an absurd conclusion.

"When you felt so worried because you didn't feel enthusiastic about the work, you were applying a totally wrong criterion of self-judgement. You argued 'If my motives were single I should *feel* just as enthusiastic in one case as in the other'—which simply isn't true at all. The only real conclusion from 'If my motives are single,' is 'I shall be prepared to do whichever is best, enthusiasm or no enthusiasm.' Feelings don't matter, essentially; they don't *indicate* anything. They are useful—the joyful and enthusiastic sort are useful—simply because they sometimes invest an idea or resolution with vividness and clarity, and so make it more *memorable:* you have the memory of it to go back to for strength, as the Apostles had the memory of the Transfiguration to take them through difficult times. And that's why God (as all spiritual writers insist) sends plenty of 'consolations' to people when they first set out to serve him."

CHAPTER III

ASCETICISM

"THERE has always been in the Church of God a most clear teaching concerning the rôle of asceticism. We might call it the Church's official doctrine on mortification. The Church has never erred through excess in the matter. If anything, the Church has curbed the ardour of the saint and the ascetic.

"There is perhaps hardly a subject, in the practical order of things, in which heresy would be easier than in this subject of mortification. And heresies there have been, because nothing looks so much like virtue as a man's hardness with his own body, since most men sin and are known by all men to be sinners, through their indulgence to the body.

"Asceticism, in the Catholic sense, is essentially the asserting of the body, not its negation. The aim of asceticism is to strengthen virtue. The Church never took any other view of it. Now virtue is in the senses; it is the highest perfection of the senses; it is purity and strength of character. Mortification is to mortify or to deaden, not the senses, but those unruly appetites that weaken the sense of purity, that weaken the moral fibre of man. To make a man pure and to make a man strong, such is the aim of mortification. To repress anything, to abstain from anything, with-

out that end in view, is not a virtuous act but an unwise act, an imprudent act, an act that is against reason" (*Abbot Vonier, in* The Human Soul, *chapter xxi*).

"It was fitting that Christ should wish to fast before his temptation. First, in order to give us an example. For since we are all in urgent need of strengthening ourselves against temptation, he, by fasting before being tempted, teaches us the need of fasting in order to equip ourselves against temptation. Hence the Apostle* (2 *Cor. vi,* 5-7) *reckons 'fastings' together with 'the armour of justice'"* (Summa, *III, Q. XLI, Art.* 3).

It would not be difficult to find a host of saints to illustrate mortification in all its moods. Indeed, it played its part in every saint. Some became saints through it; others, if we may put it so, in spite of it! The writer whom we have cited above has the following paragraph in the same chapter of his great book.

"I make so bold as to say, that a certain amount of Christian language in the matter of mortification is both metaphorical and hyperbolical. I go even further, and say that, besides exaggerated language, there has been occasionally, or even frequently, exaggerated acting in individual cases. The Church is not responsible for the over-fervid behaviour of some of her best children."

* "Fasting" stands for mortification in general. In view of certain criticisms made when these articles first appeared, it may be well to say that nothing in this chapter, or anywhere else in the book, is meant to question the need for the ordinary self-training of constant bodily self-denial, which of course every Catholic takes for granted.

We have, therefore, chosen the saint who, we think, best illustrates the Church's mind on the subject—though his mortifications were so excessive as to astonish even his contemporaries. He suits our present purpose for other reasons, too, so we shall content ourselves with this one example.

But before entering on the subject, there is another paragraph of Abbot Vonier's that we think it necessary to quote:

"There is, however, in Catholic sanctity a sacrifice of the body which could not be called mortification, though it resembles mortification. It is not intended as a protection to purity, as an exercise of courage, but as a holocaust to God, as a sacrifice, as an atonement for personal sin, or for the sin of mankind. Such are the most adorable of all sufferings, the sufferings of Christ on the cross.

"Sufferings of that kind do not come under the heading of mortification. Their explanation is more theological than psychological. There have been sufferings of that kind in the lives of the saints, whose desire it was to resemble Christ crucified, to renew in their bodies the sufferings of Christ.

"Such sufferings need not alarm us; it is part of their purpose to be according to the dictates of wisdom. Christ suffered as much as the Father in his wisdom exacted; and when he had fulfilled the measure, he pronounced his *Consummatum est.* So likewise the saint, in the imitation of his crucified Saviour, will keep the measure of wisdom, in his eagerness to resemble Christ crucified."

Such a vocation is mystical in the extreme degree. As far as we can see, it is also rare: few saints have

been privileged by God in this way. And it seems to us that self-inflicted tortures formed little part of it: these belong mostly to the psychology of asceticism. The "passion" of these saints seems to come from the hand of God. It is beyond the present writer's capabilities to deal with it; and, indeed, it is so exceptional that it probably defies all attempts to explain it or reduce it to any kind of law or working principle.* Suffice it to say that it would seem almost presumptuous for anyone to attempt to copy this sort of thing,

* Those interested in the question of how far human sufferings may be considered as "satisfaction" in a vicarious manner may be glad to hear St Thomas's views. He teaches that Christ's passion works out our salvation in five ways, "satisfaction" and "redemption" (as well as "sacrifice") belonging to "Christ's flesh" (III, Q. XLVIII, Art. 6, *ad 3m.*). To an objector who suggests that it is the person who commits the sin who ought to make the satisfaction, he makes the clear answer: "The head and members are as one mystic person, and therefore Christ's satisfaction belongs to all the faithful as being his members" (Art 2, *ad 1m.*). And *completely*, "inasmuch as it was God's flesh, the result of which was that it was of infinite worth" (*ad 3m.*). The idea of the vicarious sufferings of good men is brought forward in another objection: "Not only Christ's passion, but also that of other saints conduced to our salvation, according to Col. i, 24—'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for his body, which is the Church.'" To this St Thomas makes a noteworthy reply:

"The sufferings of the saints are beneficial to the Church, as by way, not of redemption, but of example and exhortation, according to 2 Cor. i, 6: 'Whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation'" (Art. 5, *ad 3m.*).

St Thomas, then, does not allow human sufferings any worth as in the strict sense, redemption. He makes them acceptable to God as revealing special love, and as an eloquent "exhortation" and "example" to others; and also in the ordinary way of vicarious *penance*, which has always been recognized in the Church, and which gets its value from the charity which inspires it (III Suppl. Q. XIII, art. 2).

as seen in some of the great saints, by inflicting sufferings upon himself beyond the ordinary laws of mortification; justifying this by claiming the rôle of "victim" offered in satisfaction to the Father, in union with the holy body of Christ. We have only mentioned the subject in order to clear the ground, so to speak, for our attempt to deal with the question of mortification.

ST EDMUND OF CANTERBURY

St Edmund was an ascetic by training. His mother had brought him up to fasting and penitential exercises literally from boyhood. When he and his brother went to the University of Paris and found themselves at the age of about fifteen, alone in a strange land, their first parcel from home contained little else than two hair shirts!

Gentle, kindly, sympathetic as St Edmund was to everybody else, to his own body he showed nothing but the most unremitting severity. Here, for instance, are some of the ways in which he "refrained himself from all things" that he might win in the race for holiness.

He cut down time for sleep to the very minimum, rising at midnight to assist at matins and staying in the Church "to pray before the altar of the blessed Virgin until daybreak. Then, without allowing any interval of repose for the body, he would accompany the others to the schools." This was in the days when he was studying theology at Paris, but much the same seems to have been his rule since boyhood. An account of him shortly after his ordination tells us that he never used the bed in his room, but slept on

the floor covered with a cloak and a rug, his head on a footstool, sometimes not even lying down.*

He rarely had more than one meal a day, never ate meat on a day on which he said Mass (which meant abstinence for a month at a time, sometimes). And when he was fasting he reduced his fare to bread and water.

He had such a contempt for money that "he would place the fees which he received from his pupils in his window, and covering them with dust as though to bury them, he celebrated their obsequies with these words: 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, thus should they rightly be consigned,'" and he left them there to be taken by beggars.

He wore a hair shirt, of course, continuously. And when he took a short holiday at Christmas time, and stayed in one or other of the abbeys that always welcomed him as a guest, "whereas at such times men are wont to allow themselves some relaxation he omitted nothing of his accustomed strict manner of life." Even in those days of hardihood when asceticism was common enough, St Edmund's ways astonished his contemporaries. "Such strict abstinence," writes one chronicler, "did he impose upon himself, that it can hardly be expressed by the pen. Hence some of his friends thought that he would incur wandering of the brain, or what is worse, death itself. And not without reason. For he so afflicted his body by abstinence from food, by the labour of vigils, by continual meditations and prayers, by the effusion of tears, and in many other ways, that one would scarcely

* We take all our information from the contemporary documents quoted in *The Life of St Edmund of Canterbury*, by Bernard Ward.

believe that the strength of the human body would suffice for so many labours and pains."

Yet he seems to have had good health, endless energy, an unruffled calm and joyousness, to have shown unusual brain-power as a student and an unusual excellence as a teacher. Here is a description of his outward appearance: "His features, such was the divine goodness, were well proportioned, and possessed of a subtle and joyful graciousness, and his complexion was fresh beyond that of the other disputants. . . . The garments which he usually wore were grey, neither too mean nor too costly; for, knowing the middle course in all things to be golden, he wished to have them moderate in quality."

And this mention of his moderation brings us face to face with the fact that St Edmund was, in fact, a man of common sense; that he was (during the first half of his life) a teacher, and (during the second half) a very hard-working Church dignitary, and never a fanatic; never a "spiritual athlete" like the Fathers of the Desert or the hermits of Saxon days; nor an ardent wooer of the Lady Poverty, like the enthusiastic Poverello of Assisi; nor a self-abnegating contemplative like St John of the Cross. Moreover, he was an Englishman, one of us: so we cannot give ourselves any explanation about a Spanish temperament or the sunny south or Oriental extravagance.

JUST THE CURRENT NOTION OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

As a matter of fact, this makes St Edmund's asceticism a good deal more puzzling; but that will be a good thing if it makes us take it seriously, look at it objectively, and try to understand the *principle* on

which he was acting, because, however unwise it would be for us to try and imitate the *actions* of the saints, it is positively essential that we should make our own their principles.

Well, then, St Edmund's aim—the idea that his mother had implanted in his baby mind—was to have perfect and complete control over his body so that he might be "a perfect soldier of Jesus Christ"—strong; "the temple of the Holy Ghost"—pure; and (his own especial devotion) the "familiar friend" of our Lord, loving only what he loved. He believed (as the Church teaches) that by showing the body that the soul is master in admissible (even in necessary) gratifications, it will prove itself so entirely master that the body will be less inclined to try to assert itself in what is not admissible; while contradictions will, at the same time, strengthen the will, lessen the exuberance of the body, and prove to God the sincerity of the prayer for perfection. I think we may take it that this was St Edmund's motive, and not any spirit of "holy rivalry" in self-torture, like the Fathers of the Desert; while St Francis's mystical idea of literally sharing our Lord's sufferings, or the other idea of expiating the sins of others by self-inflicted punishment, were not conscious ideas in the very medieval and very English mind of Edmund of Abingdon. He just held the current notion of asceticism, and, being a saint in the making, he applied the notion with heroic thoroughness. Perhaps the chief difference between the saints and us is that the saints keep their resolutions and we break ours. If hell is paved with broken resolutions, then heaven's floor must be a beautiful mosaic of whole ones!

SHOULD WE IMITATE?

Two further questions rise in our minds:

1. Was St Edmund right in applying the ascetical method with such extreme severity?

2. If so, should we become more holy if we adopted his method, or should we not rather have a nervous breakdown in about three weeks' time?

The answer to the first question is that St Edmund, being a sensible man, supernaturally wise, guided by the Holy Ghost, knew how much asceticism he needed to keep him strong, pure, and the wholly faithful friend of Christ. The second is no mere foolish speculation; it opens up a very practical question, and it is partly answered for us by (of all people!) a poet.

"The very conditions of sanctity may be said to have changed, so changed are we," writes Francis Thompson in *Health and Holiness*. The man of past days "was a being of another creation. He ate, and feared not; he drank, and in all Shakespeare there is no allusion to *delirium tremens;* his schoolmaster flogged him large-heartedly, and he was almost more tickled by the joke than by the cane; he wore a rapier at his side and stabbed or was stabbed by his brother man in pure good fellowship and sociable high spirits. For *him* the whole apparatus of virtue was constructed—a robust system fitted to a robust time. Strong, forthright minds were suited by strong, forthright direction, redounding vitality by severities of repression. The hot wine of life needed allay. But to our generation uncompromising fasts and severities of conduct are found to be piteously alien; not because, as rash censors say, we are too luxurious, but

because we are too nervous, intricate, devitalized. We find our austerities ready made. The east wind has replaced the discipline, dyspepsia the hair shirt. Either may inflict a more sensitive agony than a lusty anchorite suffered from lashing himself to blood. It grows a vain thing for us to mortify the appetite—would we had the appetite to mortify—macerate our evanescing flesh, bring down a body all too untimely spent and forewearied, a body which our liberal-lived sires have transmitted to us quite effectually brought down. . . .

"It was not so with our fortunate (or, at least, earth-happier) ancestors. For them, doubtless, the old idea worked roughly well. They lashed themselves with chains; they went about in the most frightful forms of hair shirt, which grew stiffened with their blood; and yet were unrestingly energetic. . . . They turned anchorites in the English country, the English fens . . . and they were not converted into embodied cramp and arthritis. This implies a constitution we can but dimly conjecture, to which austerity, so to speak, was a wholesome antidote. Their bodies were hot colts, which really needed training and breaking—and very strong breaking, too. . . . The medieval men fight amidst the torrid lands of the east jerkined and breeched with iron that it makes us ache to look upon; our men in khaki fall out by hundreds during peace manœuvres on an English down. They cheapened pain, those forefathers of ours; they endured and apportioned the most monstrous tortures with equal carelessness, reckless of their own suffering or that of others. Read the tortures inflicted on the rebels against Henry IV, and how 'good old Sir

Thomas Erpingham' rode round one of them, taunting him in the awful crisis of his agony. Yet Sir Thomas died at Agincourt in the odour of knightly honour, and doubtless was as far from remembering that thoughtless little incivility as anyone was from remembering it against him. We cannot conceive the exuberant vitality and nervous insensibility of these men. . . . Such bodies, we may well believe, needed the awe of hunger and stripes, and without vigorous rebuke from the spirit were always lying in wait for its heel."

There is something in this, but it is not all the truth. After all, we are not all degenerate in nerves and physique, common as such conditions may be in the generations which fill the great towns. The poet was generalizing too freely from his own experience, as poets do; and he was writing before the war, which set modern European men in tens of millions enduring hardnesses and braving terrors which medieval men never knew except as imagined torments of hell. What is no doubt true is that under modern conditions physical weaklings have a much better chance of survival than formerly, and therefore they have a greater say in forming public opinion about asceticism, but there are still plenty of physically perfect Christians who could carry out the full medieval programme if it were desirable; and the question still remains, is it?

THE ASCETICISM OF KEEPING FIT

Perhaps our poet is getting nearer to the mark when he points to "the incumbency of daily duty, the constant frets of the world and social intercourse . . .

the steady mortification of our sloths and vanities," and asks, "may not these things make in themselves a handsome asceticism, less heroic but not less effectual than the showy austerities of our forefathers?" It is not so much that our bodies are degenerate; rather it is that the work expected of our body and mind is so much multiplied. Both for the manual worker and the mental worker modern life has been speeded-up enormously. The problem is *how to keep fit*. As St Paul declared, in the not altogether dissimilar world of the Empire in the first century, the ascetic problem of the Christians is the same as the ascetic problem of the professional athlete: to keep in perfect training for his job. The mental worker in these days, in order to do ordinary good work, must practise an unremitting austerity at every moment in eating and drinking, getting enough sleep, taking exercise, reading the things that must be read, and in a hundred other ways that were hardly needed in more leisurely times. So, too, with the manual worker; his case is different, and his body keeps fit more easily; but what of his mind? If he is to keep his mind fit he enters upon a whole field of asceticism: is there no asceticism, then, in choosing one's reading carefully or attending evening classes after work? And then, besides mind and body, there is the heart also to be kept fit; and who shall describe the regions of asceticism which open up before anyone, Pope or peasant, who tries to do his full duty in the matter of showing attention and sympathy to his neighbour? Here also modern life demands more, simply because the modern mind has a greater imaginative capacity of entering into the feelings of others.

WILL: HUMAN REINFORCED BY DIVINE

We may piously conjecture, then, that this idea of *keeping fit*—congenial enough even now to the rather easy-going English character—played a large part in the asceticism of St Edmund. And that leads us to look at another side of the question—a side that puzzled St Edmund's contemporaries. How, they asked, could he so mortify the body, and yet be ever joyful and gracious, fresh of countenance, clear and strong of brain? Indeed, it is a question that might be asked about many of the saints.

Theology is slow to admit a miracle if there is any law of nature or law of grace by which a phenomenon may be explained. Poets, by their very love of truth, are instinctively good theologians: and here we have Francis Thompson suggesting an explanation that blends the laws of nature and grace as truthfully and subtly as St Thomas himself.

"Let us again look back to the basis of nature. In our times science has partially brought into daylight the obscure physiology of the will: we know that the will of one man may heal or quicken the body of another. We call it therapeutic hypnotism; and the long name confers scientific orthodoxy on what was a pestilent heresy. Nor only this: we know, also, the possibility of self-hypnotization; we know that a man's own will can heal or quicken a man's own self. . . . Solely as a natural matter, by its profound effect on the personality, by its quickening of the will, sanctity (then) would produce a quickening of the body. But that is only the basis, the physical basis of the process.

The body (I might say) is immersed in the soul, as a wick is dipped in oil; and its flame of active energy is increased or diminished by the strength or weakness of the fecundizing soul. But this oil, this soul, is enriched a hundredfold by the infusion of the Holy Spirit; the human will is intensified by union with the divine will; and for the flame of human love or active energy is substituted the intenser flame of divine love or divine energy. Rather, it is not a substitution; but the higher is added to the lower, the lesser augmented by and contained within the greater. The effective energies of the fleshly wick, the body, are correspondingly and immensely augmented. If self-hypnotization have quickening power, how life-giving must be that force when the human is reinforced by the divine will, the human soul gathered into the soul of all being! In such fashion is it that sanctity the destroyer becomes sanctity the preserver; and through the passes of an ascetic death leads even the body, on which its hand has lain so heavy, unto a resurrection of power.

"This truth is written large over the records of saintliness. The energy of the saints has left everywhere its dents upon the world. . . ."

"These men, in whom is the indwelling of the Author of life, scarce know the meaning of decrepitude; they are constantly familiar with the suffering, but not with the palsy of mortality. Regard Manning, an unfaltering power, a pauseless energy, till the grave gripped him; yet a 'bag of bones.'"

"It was on the instinctive knowledge of this, on the generous confidence they might trust the Creator with his creature, that the saints based the stern

handling of the body which some of them afterwards allowed to be excessive. . . ."

"But with all tender and wise allowance . . . it remains as it was said: 'He that loseth his life for me shall find it.' The remedy for modern lassitude of body, for modern weakness of will, is holiness. There alone is the energizing principle from which the modern world persists in divorcing itself."

"For the feebleness of a world seeking some maternal hand to which it may cling, a wise asceticism is remedial."

CHAPTER IV

DETACHMENT

"*TO have intercourse with God, it is first of all necessary to be detached from creatures. . . .*" "*We must especially be in that general and fundamental disposition of refusing nothing God may ask of us, and following our Lord's example, of being ready to do all that pleases his Father.* Quae placita sunt ei facio semper" (*Abbot Marmion, in* Christ the Life of the Soul).

"*Many other joys there were in Christ's human life besides that sun of brightness high up in his mind, the vision of God. . . .*

"*But the greatest of merely human joys was, no doubt, his own immaculate mother, in whose company almost the whole of his mortal life was spent*" (*Abbot Vonier, in* The Personality of Christ, *p.* 189).

Essentially bound up with the questions of asceticism and motive is the thing spiritual writers call "detachment."

To the world, detachment seems quite a simple and obvious affair—only much too uncomfortable and difficult to be practised; and they leave it to the saints, and plead the frailty of "ordinary" human nature, and Almighty God's compassion.

With the average spiritual writer of the last century

or two detachment was a favourite theme; and he, too, thought it a simple and obvious affair. A great deal that he said was unpsychological and even unphilosophical, and one wonders how many fresh young novices he gave scruples to, and how many sour old persons with hearts already none too tender, found his counsels of perfection all-too-easy to put into effect!

But to the saints, and many of those who try to live for God, detachment is anything but a simple and obvious affair. Often it is sorely puzzling. It seems full of contradictions—a great spiritual paradox. It evades all effort to systematize and reduce it to rules; for indeed in this matter every man must needs work out a system for himself. The saints soon discovered this, and ceased to worry their heads over the theory of the matter. And the amusing part is that, if you judge the lives of the saints according to the prescriptions and platitudes of the spiritual writers aforementioned, you would be obliged to give the saints a great many black marks!

ST AUGUSTINE'S SILVER SPOON

What about St Augustine, for instance, who would never eat with anything but a silver spoon? or St Philip, who not only would never use any but his own chalice in saying Mass, but would never drink from anything but his own glass! The little poor man of Assisi, who had lived chiefly on broken crusts of bread, bethought him, on his death-bed—and we love him the more for it—of a very nice dish the lady Jacoba used to make for him when he was ill in Rome, and he began dictating a letter asking her to come,

and to bring the shroud she had spun for him, and also some of the march-panes. And lo, there she was already at the door: moved by God to come with haste to her dying friend. And besides the shroud, she had thought to bring sugar and almonds and the other ingredients to make the march-panes!

Even St John of the Cross was not above enjoying asparagus. Once, on a journey, when he was too ill to eat anything, he mentioned this favourite dish. And Providence vouchsafed a miracle; for there, caught on a stone in the stream, was a bundle of asparagus; and the lay-brother, greatly wondering, took it up.

Sometimes the saints clung with extraordinary persistence to what looks like some quite unreasonable little desire of their hearts. St Clare, for instance, who, "having a great desire to eat with St Francis, often begged him to grant her this request." For a long time he refused, but in the end she won, of course. Or St Scholastica, of whom almost the only thing we know is the story of how she once got her way with St Benedict. Or the well-known story of how St Columba (already revered as a saintly man through all Ireland) persisted in copying the psalter, in spite of St Finnian's prohibition.

And St Columba is an instance of another strong attachment of the saints—love of countries or places. "To Columba the love of country came next to the love of God," and that is why St Molaise prescribed exile as his expiation: for he "knew well the character of his penitent. The penance that would satisfy that great heart must be full and complete." But if Erin was the beloved mother from whom he found it so

bitter to part, he duly fell in love with the rocky, sea-washed isles of his choice, and lover-like he sang :

"Hy of my love, Hy of my heart. . . ."

Think, again, of St Anthony, who loved Padua so much that it was in order to die there that, in the last stage of his agonizing disease, he insisted on setting out on that journey which has been described as "his *via crucis,*" because as the bullock-cart creaked laboriously along the dusty road, through the broiling Italian sun and the cloud of flies, he suffered "agony such as falls indeed to the lot of the martyrs."

It needed "the King of Northumbria, accompanied by a bishop and a great train," begging on their knees, to persuade St Cuthbert to leave "his beloved island," and be consecrated Bishop of Lindisfarne. And back to his island he went to die.

And when we come to the love of the saints for their nearest and dearest in this world, we find a flood of emotion such as is not to be found in all the chivalric literature and love stories of the past.

St Monica "seems to have literally wrestled with God for the soul of her son," and a holy bishop, watching the suffering of that faithful heart, assured her "the child of those tears shall never perish." "There is no more pathetic story in the annals of the saints than that of Monica pursuing her wayward son to Rome, whither he had gone by stealth. . . . She ultimately had the joy of seeing Augustine yield, after seventeen years of resistance," and the love that he gave her in return was so real that when she died at Ostia "the finest pages in his *Confession* were

penned as the result of the emotion Augustine then experienced."*

Another Carthaginian mother is a figure that moves our hearts even more—St Perpetua awaiting death in her dark dungeon. They bring her her baby and put him in her arms; and as she feels his little head once more on her breast, she cries out that the prison has become a palace. But it was only to tempt her to apostatize. She lets them take her baby away again rather than deny the claim of Mary's baby to the supremacy in all hearts.

ON THE TOWER WHARF

More than a thousand years later the saints in face of martyrdom were still the same. Blessed Thomas More, in another dungeon, writes his last letter to Margaret, the child of his love. The letter is written with a piece of charred wood the day before his death; and in it he says: "I never liked your manner towards me better than when you kissed me last; for I love when daughterly love and dear charity hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy. Farewell, my dear child, and pray for me, and I shall for you and all your friends that we may merrily meet in heaven." And what was her "manner" that so pleased him? Her husband, John Roper, describes that last meeting. She had waited about the Tower Wharf, where she knew he would pass. Seeing him, she first fell on her knees and received his blessing, and then, "she hasting towards him, without consideration or care of herself, pressing in amongst the midst of the

* Fr. Hugh Pope, in *Catholic Encyclopedia.*

throng and company of the guard, that with halberds and bills went round about him, and there openly in sight of them embraced him, took him about the neck and kissed him. . . . She was not able to say any word but 'Oh, my father! Oh, my father!' 'Take patience, Margaret,' he said, 'and do not grieve; God has willed it so. For many years didst thou know the secret of my heart.' From whom after she was departed, she not satisfied with the former sight of him, and like one that had forgotten herself, being all ravished with the entire love of her father, having respect neither to herself, nor to the press of people and multitude that were there about him, suddenly turned back again, ran to him as before, took him about the neck, and divers times kissed him lovingly, and at last with a full and heavy heart was fain to depart from him."

TWO QUEENS

Another Margaret, too, had a heart that could love and suffer: she is the heroine of one of the famous love-stories of the Middle Ages. St Margaret, wondering whether or not she ought to be a nun, received a very clear vocation to be a queen instead, and in due course fell in love with Malcolm. Her vocation proved Scotland's salvation, and her love, Malcolm's; he worshipped her from the first, and tried hard to make her happy, and we can hardly imagine what a joy his conversion must have been to her. But he was a fighter before all else, and not even Margaret's tears could wash away his spirit of bloody revenge. And so we see her on her death-bed, her great heart nearly broken, for she has mysteriously

foreseen what has happened in this his last fierce fight. And then they bring in the news of his death, and the death of her eldest boy. "All praise be to thee, Almighty God," she prays, in a prayer like a martyr's, "who hast been pleased that I should endure such deep sorrow at my departing; and that by means of this suffering it is thy pleasure that I should be cleansed from some of the stains of my sins."*

Another royal heart that would have been broken for the sake of its beloved, if it had not had the divine Beloved, was St Elizabeth's. She is one of the saints whose childhood gave her the opportunity of supernatural heroism, and whose sanctity was marked by miracles and graces from the first. But her time of trial seemed to have ended when she married Ludwig, and their love for each other was of the ideal type. And then, a little before their third child was born (she was twenty), Ludwig felt the irresistible call of the Crusades, and took the cross. Their parting was a heart-rending one, and when the news of his death came soon after (for he died of a sudden fever contracted at the port of embarkation) Elizabeth was almost desperate with grief, and cried out that the whole world was dead to her, now. And later, when her husband's remains were solemnly brought back to his own country, we are told that her overwhelming grief overcame her restraint and showed itself freely to all the people. Through these and other sufferings Elizabeth grew in sanctity, strengthened by God; but if she had not loved so much she could never have suffered so much.

* Prior Turgot.

FROM ST PATRICK TO ST FRANCIS DE SALES

Many of the great saints seem to have had for each other a love no less real, though necessarily more restrained and guarded. The Book of Armagh records that "Between St Patrick and St Brigid there was so great a friendship of charity that they had but one heart and one mind." A passing remark of St Bede's reveals to us the undercurrent of strong love that existed beneath the placid calm of the monastic life: how when St Ceolfrid suddenly left his English home to end his days in Rome, the departure of their beloved father caused a whirlpool of emotion in the even life of the monks, and St Bede admits with touching simplicity his own "sharp anguish of mind." There seems to have been a love like Paul and Timothy's between St Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, and the young convert, Martin (afterwards the Apostle of France). "The meetings and partings of these early Christians are so many lessons in detachment," writes one of St Martin's biographers.

Everyone has heard the story of St Jane Frances de Chantal stepping over the body of her son, to leave the world and be a nun—it is the classic example of detachment. But it is not always explained that when the boy threw himself down and so challenged his mother (and by the way, he was a self-willed boy of fourteen, and was deliberately making a scene) St Jane "stopped, overcome," and when a priest reproached her, she cried, "After all, I am a *mother*." "Her trials," we are told, "were continuous, and borne bravely, and yet she was exceedingly sensitive." This probably pleased her friend, St Francis de Sales,

because the great counsel of perfection he wished to instil into these ladies of his spiritual family, and everybody else, was the "taking, so to speak, one's soul, heart, and longings into one's hands and giving them into God's keeping." But one can't do that if one has no proper heart and longings at all.

It is pleasing to note that St Jane cried for several days on end without stopping when St Francis died.

We can see for ourselves in the instances quoted about all these saints that their very "attachments" were often the means of their sanctification; not only giving them the opportunity of great renunciations, but being in themselves a grace, a forming influence. And, of course, in all the annals of sanctity the most perfect example is to be found in that other Francis, and St Clare, of whom it has been said that "theirs was indeed a friendship—and more than a friendship in the common use of the word—such as the world can but seldom see, but should never forget: a glimpse, surely, of the heavenly life of which the world's life at its best is but a type. As such we may regard it for our own good."*

THE PRINCIPLE THAT EXPLAINS THE PARADOX

After all this, those spiritual writers look rather small with their narrow and deadening view of detachment. But the fact remains that detachment *is* a paradox. And that you have great books like the *Imitation* saying very sweeping things about earthly affection, and at the same time great saints revealing to us hearts overflowing with a wealth of human love. It remains, then, to find some principle which shall reconcile the

* Fr. Cuthbert, O.S.F.C.

apparent contradiction. And here some light seems to be shed by some letters of direction (the same quoted in a previous chapter) which have come to the present writer's notice, and from which it is permitted to quote the following extract:

"The word 'detachment' can be used in two different ways, which ought not to be confused:

"1. *Objective Detachment*—putting God unquestionably first, so that no attachment to any creature whatsoever is allowed to *hinder* our being entirely at God's service. We must be 'unattached,' in the sense of being free and ready to move at a moment's notice, ready to do this or that which may be necessary, whatever the interior wrench may be.

"This is required of *all*, even for salvation in some cases, because *every* Christian must be ready and able to cut himself off from mortal sin and its proved occasions (*e.g.*, a man who *knows* he will get drunk if he enters a public-house must objectively detach himself from public-houses and from friends who would drag him there). Also, every *generous* Christian must be ready and able to leave whatever is incompatible with his full service of God (*e.g.*, a foreign missionary who was always trying to wangle a home-leave would not be objectively detached).

"I insist on the *objective* character of this kind of detachment. In *this* sense our Lord was completely 'detached' from even our Lady, for instance.

"2. *Subjective Detachment*.—This is a different question *altogether*. It is that extent of control and repression and redirection of our own thoughts and feelings and passions which is necessary to ensure objective detachment.

"Here there are no general rules, but only individual cases, because—

(*a*) Everybody is different. They react differently to different things, their previous experience is different, their inherited qualities are different, and the extent of their self-control, and the regions where it is effective, are different: not to mention differences of time-spirit, climate, etc.

(*b*) Even if people are roughly of the same type, God may lead them in quite different ways (*e.g.*, it is obvious that some of the saints have had to pass through a stage of real disgust with all creatures before they could love them in God; and equally obvious that other saints reached the same end by a different road).

"Clearly it is *objective detachment* that God wants. He does *not* want us to aim at a subjective detachment for its own sake; otherwise the perfect Christian would be one who had no feelings at all, but who was able to simulate them well for God's service; which is an absurd supposition. As a matter of fact, Christianity means subjective *attachments* all round, even to inanimate nature, but always referring the gift to the Giver. And the more we love God the less necessary does subjective detachment become, in every sense except that of watchful discipline—which, of course, is needed always.

"3. *The Test.*—Hence both objective and subjective detachment are allowed for in the test suggested: 'Does this hinder *you* in the work God wants *you* to do?' And I can't think of any other 'principle.'

"As regards 'more or less perfect' and 'more

pleasing to God,' I think I should say that God is better pleased with a *minimum* of subjective detachment, given that our objective detachment is complete. *E.g.*, take a foreign missionary again. I don't think he would please God *better,* other things being equal, if he tried to forget his relatives at home.

"These considerations are meant to apply to all, even (and, in fact, especially) to those who aim highest and are determined to refuse God nothing. Of course, it is conceivable that God, in some individual case and as a stage of some particular process of mystical development, should allow some kind of interior chill or extinction of the heart in regard to all other creatures; but in any such case God would assuredly find ways of making his will understood and bring it to pass. Nor could such a condition ever be regarded as anything but abnormal, and it would certainly be wrong and unreasonable to seek it."

CARDINAL NEWMAN ON DETACHMENT

With all this in mind, let us look again at the saints, and we shall see how perfectly, how heroically detached they were, in the true sense of the word. And in conclusion, here is Newman's comprehensive summing-up of detachment:

"Detachment, as we know from spiritual books, is a rare and high spiritual virtue; a great saint, St Philip Neri, said that, if he had a dozen really detached men, he should be able to convert the world. To be detached is to be loosened from every tie which binds the soul to the earth, to be dependent on nothing sublunary, to lean on nothing temporal; it is to care simply nothing what other men choose to think or say

of us, or do to us; to go about our work, because it is our duty, as soldiers go to battle, without a care for the consequences; to account credit, honour, name, easy circumstances, comfort, human affections, just nothing at all, when any religious obligation involves the sacrifice of them. It is to be reckless of all these goods of life, on such occasions, as under the ordinary circumstances we are lavish and wanton, if I must take an example, in our use of water—or as we make a present of our words without grudging to friend or stranger—or as we get rid of wasps or flies or gnats which trouble us, without any sort of compunction, without hesitation before the act, and without second thought after it."*

* *Historical Sketches,* vol. iii, p. 130.

CHAPTER V

MYSTICISM

"*THE soul's condition requires God, if the soul is to be pure and happy.*

"*This need not scandalize us; we need not ask ourselves, 'Why does God create a soul so imperfect as to be in want of his grace, if it is to be at all complete? The very concept of man is the concept of a compound of spirit and matter. The soul is, after all, the lowest spirit, the next best imitation of God's perfection, after the last angel. It is, so to speak, in the very essence of man to be in want of God; God has not made him arbitrarily imperfect, but God has made him the being that is between matter and spirit; that such a being should be in want of God is part of its nature, and therefore the position could not be considered to be something arbitrary.*

"*There is absolutely nothing repugnant in the idea of God creating a being, whose very essence requires God's grace, in order that it should be complete. The only thing we have to assume is this, that the grace of God is at hand whenever required.*

"*Sanctifying grace is the fitness, divinely received, in the human soul, to see God one day, as he is in himself, and to be happy in this vision of him. . . .*

"*It is, I think, easy even for those to whom theology is not familiar, to see the difference between*

sanctifying grace and what we usually call grace. By grace we usually mean a spiritual light at a given moment, in a given difficulty. It is a light dawning all at once upon our mind or upon our imagination. It makes us see a particular fact from a new point of view. . . . It is a sustaining power given to our will, making it to do the things from which at one time it recoiled with horror. It is the unction of prayer, the joy in suffering and poverty; it is infinitely multitudinous in its workings, following up the particular bent of every character with astonishing subtlety; and conquering our most enduring obstinacies. . . .

"Actual graces are direct and transient operations of the Holy Ghost, on our intellect, on our will, on our senses. They help us to do good; we feel them when they come; we long for them when they are gone, we pray for them to return. Their importance is measured by their usefulness. Their adaptation to the particular difficulty of the individual character is one of their characteristics.

"None of these features are to be found in sanctifying grace. It lies deep in the centre of our spirit, unnoticed by man, as long as his soul is in the body. It never changes, but it grows more intense; it is not adapted to the complexities of the individual character, it is the uniform brightness that makes all the children of God bear the same family likeness. It is to be observed, however, that the actual graces just described are given by the Holy Ghost only with a view to produce and augment sanctifying grace in the soul" (*From* The Human Soul, *pp.* 22-23 *and* 264-268. *By Abbot Vonier, O.S.B.*).

THE MYSTICS

The mystics were men and women in whom grace took the form of a sensible thirst after God, of a very clear perception of him, of the gift of contemplation. All the mystics had times of "dryness," when they felt much as the majority of us do in the matter of prayer. But so convinced were they of the value of prayer as a means of intensifying sanctifying grace in their souls that they persevered and managed to hold out until "consolation" returned. By "the mystics" is usually meant those who made prayer their chief occupation, their special means of serving God. Some of them became canonized saints, some did not. All the canonized saints were men and women of prayer, and all seem to have found joy and refreshment in prayer, but with some the special grace that helped their sanctification was rather a zeal for work, the gift of teaching, fortitude under persecution, the carrying out of some special mission. Sanctifying grace was in these in as intense a degree as in the most elevated mystics; they put God first as completely; they even found their joy and constant reward in him, as actually; they lived as "supernaturally." But we do not speak of them as "mystics" because grace did not work with them in quite the same way. Their prayer was not extraordinary in character. They did not make prayer their chief occupation.

Whether the grace of "mysticism" was something especially adapted to the natural character of the man, or a special gift bestowed by God, we cannot

tell, and it does not matter. On the whole, however, it seems probable that the former was usually the case.

For one thing, all mystics—and especially the *great* mystics—have been most vividly aware that all through their lives, and at any time, spurious mystical experiences might come to them. They were, therefore, continually on their guard; and were never tired of warning their less perfect disciples of the danger. In very objective times like the Middle Ages, such phenomena were always put down to the devil. The unhappy ecstatic was told to throw holy water on the appearance—even if it was apparently our Lord himself; just as the simple Pyrenean peasants made Bernadette throw holy water on our Lady. But practical St Teresa, who had a sense of humour and a knowledge of human nature, was much more ready to find a psychological explanation; while St John of the Cross waxes almost fierce in his denunciation of self-deluded would-be mystics.

Again, many of the great religions of the past have had their forms of mysticism, with phenomena, and even a teaching, not altogether unlike Christian mysticism. Race seems the chief factor in regulating the matter: some races did not produce mystics or a mystical type of religion, and others did. Much the same may be seen in the Church itself.

In studying the various manifestations of mysticism in the history of the Catholic Church, one must, therefore, always bear in mind that at any time the bones of natural mysticism may show through, since, after all, the Church is part-human. And it becomes of interest to try and detect the causes for the various

lapses from the perfect type of Catholic spirituality which do, from time to time, occur.

THE FATHERS OF THE DESERT

"The very word 'monk' is a revolution, for it means solitude, and came to mean community," remarks Chesterton.* But it was a revolution within the Church, and, therefore, fruitful. It all started with the Fathers of the Desert.

"The immediately valuable element in this strange movement," says Fr. Martindale, "valuable, I mean, for the individual monk, and, it has been proved, for European civilization generally, is that it put order into mysticism."† And the point is that if the Fathers of the Desert had not begun as solitaries and ended as communities they would never have been the founders of mystical theology. And another point is that, just as "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath," according to one of our Lord's rather revolutionary statements, so monastic life was made for the mystic, and not the other way about.

The Fathers of the Desert are, then, of more importance in the great process called "the development of doctrine" than people often realize. Not that they ever dreamed of such a thing, themselves. Their only idea in going out into the desert was to get far from the madding crowd, and find God. They had no theory of life; no views, even, about contemplation. On the other hand, they were not star-gazers, idle dreamers: they were men who knew just what they wanted, and were practical enough to get it.

* *A Short History of England*, p. 38.
† "Sons of St Anthony" (*Month*, April, 1918).

It was a most unexpected turn for Christian events to take. Catholicism was essentially social, gregarious —and here were men insisting on being self-sufficient individualists. The Church lived mainly by her sacramental life; and here were laymen proposing to do without the Sacraments—as their daily bread, at all events: for few even of the abbots were priests. Ordinariness was the characteristic of the Christians, as very early observers record: and here were men bent on being extraordinary. What did the Church feel about it, one cannot help wondering? We can only deduce what she thought and felt, from what she did. Chesterton has put it neatly. "The Christian Church had from the first dealt with these visions as being special adventures which were to the adventurous. She reconciled them with natural human life by calling them specially good, without admitting that the neglect of them was necessarily bad. She took the view that it takes all sorts to make a world, even the religious world." It reveals a trait of our Church which we know and love, and yet a trait which outsiders little guess.

But there is something else to be said as well. It was mysticism and nothing else that drove these men into the desert. They desired to speak alone with God on mountain-top or plain because Christ was in them—the Christ who spent nights on the mountains; who loved to go aside and rest awhile in a desert place with a few chosen disciples. And the fact that there *was* this aspect of our Lord is what justified their vocation, and made the Church feel they must not be hindered. But just as in the martyrs, in the teachers, in the active ministers of the Christian life, the

very circumstances of Christ's own earthly life are strangely reproduced, so in these men who reflected Christ the mystic.

"And rising very early, going out he went into a desert place: and there he prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said to him, All seek for thee. And he saith to them: Let us go into the neighbouring towns and cities, that I may preach there also: for to this purpose am I come."

Even so to Cuthbert on his lonely island, to Martin in his hermit's cell, came men to drag them off to be bishops. So St Guthlac, in Croyland's watery waste, was mobbed for his miracles. And, like Christ, they turned with sweet unselfishness from the prayer they loved, and did as they were entreated.

Well, then, the mystics of Egypt were allowed to go out and try their hand at being hermits. They settled down happily to enjoy God in their blessed solitariness. And then came the irony of fate—or, as we like better to think of it, a sort of divine practical joke, which was to have far-reaching results. St Anthony, who wanted to be alone, found himself ruling a mountainful of monks, till the starlit silences of Colzim resounded day and night with the chanting of the Psalms. Ammon, brooding on God by the dark pools of Nitria, found himself the centre of five thousand monks who had crept out gradually and claimed him as their spiritual father. And the same with St Hilarion in Palestine.

But it is important to remember that these multitudes came out precisely as individuals. The great men who started this desert movement were, first and always, solitaries; each went into the desert to pray,

not to organize a community, and the men who came out to him, came out to be solitaries too, and to satisfy their mystical cravings. They were only grouped together for convenience.

But charity will out, when Christians get together; and charity began to bind them to each other, so that they found God not only in their inner consciousness, in the rocks and stars and vast silences, but in one another. God began to speak through human voices, as he will do as long as the visible Church shall last. The human desire to share, to teach, to give and receive and obey began to assert itself. "They chatted simply together of their experiences, and thus they planted for us the landmarks of the Christian life. They examined their consciences, they had their directors, and to this day their prayer is held out to us as a model."*

But if they first evolved their spiritual principles by "chatting simply together of their experiences," it soon became something much more definite than that. Anthony and the others knew what was what by instinct, so to speak: their minds were grace-illumined. But the rank and file, the hungry five thousand who had rushed out into the desert, needed plain and solid food, the very elements and platitudes of the spiritual life. They were set down in ranks by fifties and by hundreds, and the bread of truth, gathered from the hands of the Master by his chosen disciples, was faithfully meted out to them. A heavy thoroughness characterized the teachers of the desert.

So far, so good; and much useful work was done. Exceedingly solid foundations were laid, an enormous

* Fr. Dalgairns' Introduction to *The Fathers of the Desert* (Hahn-Hahn).

number of spiritual experiments were tried out and recorded. And one of the Church's most vital institutions—monastic life—was started.

But, alas! to every good movement there are a number of hangers-on of inferior quality, ready to applaud, keen to share, but with no real vocation, no common sense, even. As soon as these become the majority, or otherwise come into power, it is the beginning of the end—and the speedier the end, the better.

No need for us to go into details about the fanatics who postured as monks; who, "brawling in the market-place, bursting into palaces, filthy of dress, fantastic in penances, excited the rage not alone of the cultured enemies of all enthusiasm, but of ardently ascetic spirits like St Jerome, who both by example and writing testified to his supreme admiration for the pure monastic ideal." No need to enlarge on these degenerates, for the reader is fully aware of their existence: as Fr. Martindale says in the opening lines of his study, "unfortunately one's vulgar sense is always flicked earliest by the startling and the exaggerated; and it is difficult not to see, first of all, in this curious page of history precisely what is least admirable in it—namely, the pillars, the tubs, the tricks of demons; the abnormalities in short."

Still, they did exist; and so did the type of desert monks whom Fr. Martindale calls "the stupid. Men often see only the externals of life," he goes on, "and fail utterly to grasp its inner spirit. To a greater or less degree, monks of this limited mentality mimicked the practices of those great men round whom they grouped themselves, and tried to excel what they saw

done. . . . It was in the control and educating of these limited minds and headstrong impulses that the monastic ideal of obedience became so healthfully operative."

But the "infection of genuine fanaticism" is even more dangerous, and much of the desert asceticism of later days Fr. Martindale places in that "very horrible department of human perversion" which had already produced those pagan fanatics gone mad of self-inflicted wounds, and the Syrian priests standing in frantic insomnia on their pillars. "Blood intoxicates always, whether it be another's or one's own. . . . Short of blood, pain can come to fascinate, too." And it must be remembered that this sort of thing has cropped up among the mystics of all ages, and even forced itself, disguised, among the holy doings of great saints. They all found it as difficult to strike the happy medium as we do: and surely nature and not grace explains their more repellent practices.

To insist on the exaggerated and abnormal aspect of the first great monastic movement of Christendom is unfair, as Fr. Martindale points out. But just as it is all this that has caught our imagination, and not the sound ascetical training, the grinding at the grammar of the spiritual life, so it was inclined to do in the case of the European imitators; who did, as a matter of fact, lay far too much stress on an outward conformity to the life practised in the desert. And it is here that come in the really serious results of the exaggerated asceticism associated with the monk mystic of early days.

ST BENEDICT

The idea started by St Anthony in Egypt, and St Basil in the East, gradually spread to various parts of Europe—chiefly Italy, Gaul and Ireland. The Western monks, instead of wisely trying to acclimatize the system and adapt it to its new surroundings, tried to imitate the saints of the Thebaid as closely as possible. For a time they succeeded, and there was an asceticism in Gaul fiercer than anything in Egypt, and moulded rather on the extravagancies of Syria. And then the reaction set in; and it was pretty bad, as we know from the description of the monastery St Benedict tried to rule before founding his own monasteries.

"This falling away," says Abbot Butler, "may be ascribed largely to the fact that the monks of Italy and Gaul were endeavouring to emulate a life hard enough in Oriental lands, but doubly hard in Western Europe; and were trying to live up to an ideal which the climatic and other conditions of the country rendered impossible, or at any rate extremely difficult. The downward process would inevitably be hastened by the discouragement and demoralization consequent on an abiding sense of failure. As Mr. Dudden puts it: 'Though a few monks and anchorites lived up to the Eastern standard of asceticism, the majority of religious found the ideal too high for them, and, in despair of attaining to it, became careless and lax.' Such was the prevailing condition of monasticism in Western Europe at the opening of the sixth century, and such were the dangers threatening it when

St Benedict founded his institute and wrote his Rule."*

What St Benedict did was, indeed, of almost inestimable importance from the point of view of the establishment of Christendom, and the re-civilization and co-ordination of Europe when the Pope took up the reins that had slipped from the hands of the emperors. Of that we shall speak in the chapter on MISSION. The present point is that St Benedict was nothing if not a mystic; that he left the world driven by his mysticism into the mountains; and that when he founded his monasteries and wrote his Rule, he was catering for mystics—using, adapting to his disciples the mystical theology he had imbibed from St Anthony through Cassian: building something fresh, certainly, but on foundations already laid, and using many ideas already belonging to Catholic mystical theology. But he contributed an essential idea that was quite new, as we shall see presently, and just as the decadence of the older monasticism infected all Christendom, so the Benedictine idea of prayer and work and self-discipline in the common life filtered through all grades of society, created a new literature, and gave Christendom a spirituality that, while capable of rising to heights of mysticism rarely met with hitherto, also provided a sane system of prayer not out of reach of any man of goodwill. It was St Gregory the Great who really taught Europe to pray: but modern scholars unite in ascribing Gregory's ideas and spiritual teaching to the Benedictine Order to which he belonged, and which he used as the instrument of his great mission. Of his teaching, more anon.

* *Benedictine Monachism*, p. 22.

THE DANGER OF DIVERSITY

"For fear lest an exaggerated diversity of religious rules should breed confusion in the Church, we forbid anyone at all to introduce any fresh rules." So announced the Lateran Council; and almost at once Francis and Dominic—both typical sons of their Mother, though so different from each other—arrived in Rome and got their own way—to the enormous benefit of the Church. But our present point is that already a multiplication of Orders had shown itself to be a spiritual danger. And we may conclude that if the Franciscans and the Dominicans were two very necessary exceptions, they may well, like all exceptions, have proved the rule. The Church had something definite in her mind when she made that very decided prohibition; she really scented danger. She was to allow a great many more exceptions, yet: but we do not know that she changed her mind about the danger.

Riches and lay interference had taken away the primitive spirit of prayer which characterized the Benedictines. There had been important reforms—and it is interesting that England had welcomed the reform of Citeaux (which was a return to very primitive ideas), so that at the time of the Reformation most of our Benedictine monasteries were Cistercian. But need of reform always proves a stimulus to enterprising spirits; and we may be permitted to conclude that the multiplication of Orders was the result of Benedictine decadence. Men like Biscop, for instance, were doing the work of all the later types of religious, and doing it well. If the Order had continued to work

in this spirit, probably no one would have dreamt of wanting to be anything but a Benedictine. But the fact remains that Benedictinism was no longer spiritually satisfying, and that a multitude of Orders came into being (or were revived in a reformed condition—*e.g.*, the Carmelites).

What was the result, from the mystical point of view? We speak as one less wise—but, nevertheless, trying to make a helpful guess. It seems to us that the diversity tended to reduce Catholic spirituality to its constituent elements, and that what we have called "the bones of natural mysticism" began to show through. When the divers types of spiritual men joined forces in one Order—as in the golden age of the Benedictines—they balanced each other. They pooled their personalities and their mysticism; and, if we may press the metaphor, what was human, natural, sank to the bottom of the pool, and the catholic, the universal, the essentially supernatural, remained on the surface and moulded Catholic thought.

The multiplication of Orders meant spiritual specialization; types were sorted: a kind of intensive breeding happened. In the middle of it all came the Protestant heresy, and found a better breeding-ground than the heresies had found when Catholic spirituality was all of a piece. And the counter-Reformation produced a crop of new Orders—spiritual ones to combat heresy, charitable and educational ones to deal with the material devastations.

As ever, the lay minds followed suit. They tended rather to sort themselves into two categories, the *ordinary* and the *would-be perfect*. The ordinaries thought they could do nothing but a little vocal

prayer; the would-be perfect struggled with an effort to "acquire contemplation." And both—nearly everybody, except real saints and real simpletons—got a tinge, as it were, of heresy: Jansenism on one hand, and Quietism on the other. One cannot help feeling that the folk of earlier days, who fed on solid stuff from the Fathers, meted out by solid monks, who showed a solid front to the world, would never have come so close to these two most directly un-Catholic heresies.

These two heresies and their effect on Catholic thought were, from the point of view of mysticism, the worst result of the spiritual decadence of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance period. They were quite as much a relapse into the non-supernatural phenomena of the human spirit as the fanaticism of the desert—though of a different type. The Quietists were first cousins to the Neo-Platonists, who rivalled the early Christian mystics. The Jansenists were only reactionaries shooting off at yet *another* tangent, from an impossibly high ideal. Instead of bringing a violent sort of materialism in their wake, they brought that spiritual plague called "scruples." And in yet another type of mind you got the quaint anomaly of men redeemed and sanctified by Jesus Christ as earnestly anxious about the exact amount of *merit* attached to their actions as a devotee of Tibet.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good"; or, in more Christian phrase, "to them that love God all things work together unto good." England—through being cut off from the rest of Christendom for a time—escaped many of these incidental reactions of the post-Reformation period on the Continent. What there

is of such things amongst Catholics in this country, has been imported comparatively recently; it does not come from English writers; it doesn't fit the English mind. We may be glad that Newman had so fully imbibed the Fathers before he became the leader and mainspring of Catholic thought in England.

English writers—and readers—are not obliged to be familiar with all the ramifications of Continental mysticism; or with the explanations and comments that modern French writers make when they quote Pascal, Bossuet or Fenelon. At the time of the Reformation our spiritual pastors were largely Cistercians, and English piety was noted for a solid simplicity. The best way for us, perhaps, is to short-circuit the later mystics, and pick up the threads of English Catholic piety where they were broken.

BENEDICTINE MYSTICISM

It is impossible to write about mysticism without continually mentioning religious Orders: not that mysticism is commensurate with life under the three vows; but the mystics of every age—the majority of them—have always gravitated towards whatever form of religious life was the order of the day, whether eremitical, monastic, mendicant, or of the diverse types of later times. These mystics, while flying from the world, ended in having a very marked influence on the world. As we have seen, the lay-folk start by imbibing the sound teaching of the spiritual experts; follow them in their period of exaggeration, and get involved in the same reaction.

When, therefore, we head this section "Benedictine Mysticism," we do not mean to deal with something

belonging exclusively to that great Order: we mean the type of mysticism that dominated Christendom from the seventh to the thirteenth century, and especially found its home in the English character; and as we have said, we think it worth while studying it somewhat in detail in a book on spiritual psychology for English readers, because this type of mysticism held sway in England at the time our country broke off communications with the rest of Christendom. It seems to us that to go back and pick up the threads is not a retrograde step; that we shall not thereby find ourselves left behind in some great spiritual advance made by Europe meanwhile; for it seems improbable that in this sense there *was* an advance. It seems to us that the various Orders that came at the end of, and after, the Middle Ages, did not stand for any new advance in spiritual life, but existed to combat some evil or do some particular good. St Francis was sent to combat worldliness and make Catholics remember the Gospels. St Dominic came to get the Church to take over the new learning, and put the teaching of doctrine on the same level of efficiency as the teaching of "the liberal arts." St Ignatius has been described as "bringing up storm troops" to help the Pope resist the depredations of Protestantism; and as to his spiritual system, it seems to us that its chief aim was to develop a type of conscience that left no loophole for escape or compromise in an age of compromise, evasion, and moral cowardice. As to its mysticism or special kind of prayer, this appeals more to a particular type of mind; and, anyhow, it never claimed to be more than a method.

But all this is in parenthesis. The point we were

really making is that "Benedictine mysticism" is simply the mysticism of the Fathers of the Church, edited, so to speak, by that great mystic and popular teacher, St Gregory, and lived by the monks, through whom it came to mould the thought of Christendom. Also that Benedictine mysticism is indigenous to England, since the English were converted by the great Benedictine Pope, and the race moulded and Christianized by Benedictine monks just at the impressionable period when the Teutonic races were settling down and inter-marrying with the British population, and the traditions of the new race of Englishmen were being formed. It would take too long here and now to prove how much England owes to St Gregory, and how persistent are the traditions formed in those days: we refer the interested reader to Lingard's *History of the Anglo-Saxon Church,* and Cardinal Gasquet's *Mission of St Augustine*. Suffice it to say that St Gregory is the father of medieval mysticism, and that not only did this find its true home in England in the centuries immediately subsequent to the great Pope, but largely reached Europe via England! This somewhat startling statement will be vindicated at the end of the chapter. First, to show how St Gregory was, indeed, an eminent mystic; and then to give his mystical doctrine, which, we somehow feel, will fit a great many English minds to-day, when life in the world is more than ever distracting; and, within convent walls, a new necessity to compete with the world in matters of education has had to be taken into account, with a resulting tax upon the powers of "recollection" of the individual religious.

ST GREGORY AS MYSTIC

St Gregory's greatness as a Pope has, in a way, eclipsed him as a great teacher of mystical theology. And yet it was as such that he chiefly shone in the centuries that came after him, as far down, indeed, as St Thomas Aquinas, who, in his great treatise on prayer,* quotes him more often than any other writer except St Augustine. His books were enormously popular everywhere, but especially in England and the part of Europe evangelized by English missionaries. We are told that Gregory's Latin style is recognizable in the writings both of his English admirers and the crop of writers belonging to Charlemagne's revival of learning. But it was not so much as scholar or theologian that he shone. Rather it was because, like the wise scribe of our Lord's saying, he brought out of his treasury things new and old—his own mystical experiences, and the ancient wisdom of the Fathers and of Holy Scripture.

Despite the enormous number of outward cares which filled St Gregory's life as Pope, he must be counted among the Church's greatest contemplatives. It was to the life of contemplation that he felt drawn. In an intimate letter to St Leander, he describes the struggle he had as a young man to leave the world. But having done so, he found such peace and sweetness in the life of prayer that his soul ever after longed for this. He was convinced that it was for his soul's good that he should be free of earthly occupations, and he honestly feared them. His letters to his friends, on becoming Pope, are full of regret that he has lost

* *Summa*, IIª-IIæ.

"the sweets of contemplation," and "the supreme delight of my seclusion." But so convinced was he of the importance of prayer that all through those busy years of his pontificate he daily gave time to the exercise of contemplation. Now, however, it was a hard and difficult thing, and he describes vividly the distractions that all those who try both to work and pray know only too well, and must accept as one of the "hard things" that falls to the lot of the disciple, along with weariness, sickness, poverty, and all the other circumstances that can be avoided if self is put first and service second.

"When in the monastery, I was able to restrain my tongue from useless talk and keep my mind almost continually intent on prayer. But after I placed the pastoral burden on the shoulders of my heart, the soul could not concentrate itself, because it wanders over many things. . . ."

"This burdensome honour now depresses me much; innumerable cares create a din around me, and when the mind collects itself for God, they cleave it with their noise as with piercing swords. There is no rest for the heart. It lies prostrate in the depths, oppressed by the weight of its thoughts. Seldom or never do the wings of contemplation raise it on high. The sluggish mind is listless, and in the temporal cares roaring around almost reduced to stupor; at one time it is engaged over earthly things, at another is employed even over what is carnal, and sometimes, with exacting loathing, it is forced into things to which even fault is attached. . . . I sailed with a prosperous wind when I led a tranquil life in the monastery. . . . I suffered shipwreck in the lost quiet of mind."

ST GREGORY ON THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

As we have said, the general mysticism of an age or country depends directly on the mysticism of the dominant religious order. What we must examine, then, is not so much St Gregory's teaching with regard to prayer and the mystical states of individual souls, as what he had to say about monastic life as such, from the mystical point of view. This subject has been dealt with very completely by Abbot Butler in his *Benedictine Monachism*. Especially useful is his summary of St Gregory's teaching. We will give Abbot Butler's argument briefly, but the passages giving St Gregory's own teaching must be quoted in full, and we feel the reader will be grateful for this, and grateful to the one who has collected the passages, and woven them for us into a harmonious whole.

The question, what *is* the contemplative life? is first of all dealt with. It is shown that the life lived by Teresian Carmelites, Poor Clares, and some Benetictine nuns (among women), and Carthusians, Camaldolese, and Trappists (among men), is the kind of life understood by the word "contemplative" in modern times. Next, that although the life of the monks in the time of St Gregory and the subsequent centuries was not of the type just mentioned, yet "the Benedictine tradition that their life is contemplative begins with St Gregory, and can be traced by a catena of utterances of representative Benedictines through the Middle Ages and down to modern times."

The truth is, of course, that the term has changed its connotation more than once in the course of time. The idea of *a life of prayer only* was pushed to its

extreme limit in the monks of Egypt. But the three great cenobite founders—Pachomius, Basil and Benedict—all turned away from this.

"The story of St Benedict's life, as told by St Gregory, affords indications that certain good works of the active life found place in his programme. . . .

"In the foregoing chapter we found that St Gregory first formulated the Benedictine idea of contemplation; and similarly, he it was who formulated the Benedictine theory of the contemplative life. He has written very fully, and in many places, of the Two Lives, the active and the contemplative, and the relations between them, and the conciliation of their claims on the individual. . . . St Thomas takes him as the principal authority on the subject, as, indeed, he was throughout the Middle Ages. St Gregory gives what I believe is the first full definition or description of the two lives.

"'There are two lives in which almighty God by his holy word instructs us, the active and the contemplative.

"'The active life is to give bread to the hungry, to teach the ignorant the word of wisdom, to correct the erring, to recall to the path of humility our neighbour when he waxes proud, to tend the sick, to dispense to all what they need, and to provide those entrusted to us with subsistence. But the contemplative life is: to retain indeed with all one's mind the love of God and neighbour, but to rest from exterior action, and cleave only to the desire of the Maker, that the mind may now take no pleasure in doing anything, but having spurned all cares, may be aglow to see the face of its Creator; so that it already knows how to bear with sorrow the burden of the corruptible flesh, and

with all its desires to seek to join the hymning choirs of angels, to mingle with the heavenly citizens, and to rejoice at its everlasting incorruption in the sight of God.'*

"The following summary of St Gregory's doctrine on the two lives is brought together from various places of his writings, but the substance of it all is to be found in the *Morals*.

"The active life is by necessity, the contemplative by choice, because one may enter the heavenly kingdom without having exercised the contemplative life, but no one can enter it without having exercised the good works of the active life. The active life can be laid hold of in its fulness in this world, and ends with it; but only the beginning of the contemplative life can be tasted here, to be perfected in the other world. The active life is more productive than the contemplative, but the latter is of greater merit and better. The active life comes first, and only after it has been duly practised is one able to enter on the contemplative, and at all times it is necessary to return frequently from the contemplative to the active life.

"Cassian recognized that the act of contemplation cannot be continual in this life; St Gregory goes further and holds that a contemplative life, such as that aimed at by Cassian's hermits, cannot, in practice, be continual, and that the most that is feasible is an alternation of the two lives."

"Such a union of the two lives is taught by the example of Jesus Christ. 'Christ set forth in himself patterns of both lives. . . . He gave his faithful ones

* *Homilies on Ezechiel*, II, ii, 7, 8.

an example not to neglect, through love of contemplation, the care of their neighbours; nor, again, to abandon contemplative pursuits, from being too immoderately engaged in the care of their neighbours: but, so to combine these things, by applying their mind to both, that the love of their neighbour may not interfere with the love of God; nor, again, the love of God cast out, because it transcends, the love of their neighbour.'

"Enough has been adduced to show that for St Gregory the two lives are not lived each apart by two sets of men. They are to be combined in the life of each one. The active life alone is unsatisfactory for the spiritually minded: the contemplative life alone is impracticable for anyone. The following passage gives his idea of the contemplative life as actually lived.

"'When the minds of the elect, through the grace of an active life being vouchsafed them, abandon the paths of error, they never return to the evil courses of the world which they have forsaken; but when through the gaze of contemplation they are led to stay themselves from this same active life, they "go and return," in that, because they are never able to continue for long in contemplation, they again let themselves out in action, that by using themselves in such things as are immediately near them, they may recruit their strength; and may be enabled by contemplation again to soar above themselves. But while this practice of contemplation is in due method resumed at intervals of time, we hold on assuredly without failing to all its entireness (*soliditas*); for though the mind being overcome by the weight of its infirmity

falls short, yet being restored again by continual efforts it lays hold thereof. Nor should it be said to have lost its stability in that which, though it be ever-failing in, it is ever pursuing, even when it has lost the same.'*

"This passage is of an interest quite unique. In it we have the definition of a contemplative life given by one who, next to St Benedict, is himself the most commanding figure in Benedictine history, and one of the greatest masters of the spiritual life that the Western Church has produced. Moreover, he is speaking here as a Benedictine Abbot to his monks in intimate conference. We have seen that St Benedict turned away from the presentation of the contemplative life given by his favourite Cassian; and here St Gregory formulates a theory of contemplative life conformable to St Benedict's action. To me this utterance appears to come next in importance to the Holy Rule itself, as the authentic primitive Benedictine legislation on what is probably the most vital point of Benedictine theory; yet I do not know that it has been brought to bear on the elucidation of the question: What is Benedictine contemplative life? But it is of decisive value in determining St Gregory's mind, and as such, it is worthy of our careful study.

"It is seen, then, that the contemplative life as understood by Cassian's hermits, and also in later times—one from which the works of the active life are excluded almost wholly, or reduced to the smallest possible measure—did not fall within St Gregory's mental horizon at all. His only conception of a contemplative life is one in which active good works hold

* *Morals*, x, 31.

a considerable, and even, in point of time, a predominant place; but in which, for all that, the effort to exercise also the works of the contemplative life is kept habitually in operation. It is, in short, a 'mixed life,' wherein each of the two lives is really and fully lived. . . . And so a Benedictine monk, if he is to be a contemplative after St Gregory's idea, while he carries out his allotted works of the active life, must keep alive an unflagging love and desire of the contemplative life and its works, and must, at steadily recurring intervals, make the effort to give himself up to contemplation: and, so doing, he has St Gregory's assurance that he holds on to the contemplative life in its entireness, without infidelity or instability. St Gregory did not look on contemplation as a nearly superhuman thing, one of the rarest of graces. On the contrary, he believed it to be within the reach of all men of good will who give themselves seriously to prayer and keep due guard upon their hearts.

"We should expect St Bernard, speaking to the primitive Cistercians, to present a severe view of the contemplative life, akin to that of the Egyptian monks in Cassian; but we find him following closely, and point by point, St Gregory's doctrine on the relations between the two lives as set forth above."

Perhaps for the ordinary reader the chief value of all this is to release his habit of mind from a restricting idea. The accepted notion that contemplation belongs to the professional contemplative has suggestionized everybody else, so that we all have an unformulated idea that such prayer is not for us. Let us trust this "assurance" of St Gregory's then, and believe that we can really pray amidst the end-

less distractions and responsibilities of modern life—even those who are not professional religious, but who would fain give themselves to God's service. It is almost a truism that whoever would *work* for Christ, faithfully and perseveringly, must pray, too: and not just vocal prayer, but the kind of prayer that unites the soul to God and gives it fresh storings of divine life.

And yet, as all who have tried it know, to give oneself up to prayer in the midst of work is easier said than done! And trite platitudes and unpsychological definitions have not improved matters. Once more, then, we will give an extract from the priest quoted in other chapters, for it seems to us that in this lucid and practical summing-up of the facts he brings out very clearly what St Gregory has in mind in his teaching on the two lives.

"People talk about the 'active life' and the 'contemplative life' and the 'mixed life' as if the active life meant giving the mind (and arms and legs, too, perhaps, but chiefly mind) mostly to *work for* God, while the contemplative occupies his mind mostly with God Himself. But prayer is not so much using the mind; prayer is the spending of love. Thinking about a thing is not the same as loving. One is action, the other is passion; one is doing, the other is enjoying; one is effort which tires the mind, the other is rest and renewal.

"The active life, then, means the thinking-and-planning life; the contemplative life is the love-life. Neither can be altogether left out, in any case. The lover must use his mind, too, because one cannot love

what one does not know; also because even the highest love will have its echoes in the emotions, and one's thinking should always be strong in proportion to one's feelings. In like manner it is necessary, even in the order of nature, that the active mind should keep alive and healthy its power of loving. In contrast to the proverbial Englishman who, by way of recreating himself, must go out to kill something, the disciple of Christ who is immersed in work for God must learn, if only for the good of his own soul, to put his work aside and go out and love something, lose himself in something: sky or running water or trees or birds; or, better still, his fellow human creatures (not only individual friends, but also, *e.g.*, children en masse, or the people in the street, or in a hospital or workhouse or prison—any living soul, in fact, as being a *person* created and loved by God); and best of all, the Uncreated Itself.

"Now if a man's heart turns easily and naturally towards the Uncreated (as a flower turns to the sun as soon as it is free to turn, or as the lover turns to the thought of the beloved), then he is what I call a contemplative and a mystic, and he will very likely feel drawn to go off to a monastery or somewhere where he will be free to love God all the time. (Whether he turns to the Uncreated *away* from the created, or *through* the created, seems only a matter of temperament: the difference between St John of the Cross and St Francis; or St Teresa and St Clare.)

"Theoretically there is nothing to prevent the active life and the contemplative life being both lived at full intensity by one person, in a well-alternated rhythm;

some apparently manage it; and theoretically again this 'mixed' life would perhaps be rightly called the 'highest,' whatever that may mean. But often in practice, when the mind is taken up with *real* work—intense, urgent, personal, perhaps creative and dangerous work—the love-life suffers. St Benedict said *laborare est orare,* but he meant digging; it is not so true of work in the fullest sense. As Darwin, putting all his interest into his researches, gradually lost all taste for music and poetry, so the ever-active worker in God's cause is likely to find himself becoming less capable of that delighted contemplation—that enjoying of things, of people, or of God—which is of the inmost essence of love, even (or especially) of *amor benevolentiae.* Many find that they must come to a choosing; either they must be loyal to God's work and let their love-possibilities remain comparatively undeveloped until heaven, or else they must leave the real work to others and hold the world well lost in exchange for leisure to love. This latter choice, it seems to me, is the inner spring of the full contemplative vocation."

ENGLAND AND BENEDICTINE MYSTICISM

We will now vindicate our bold statement about England's part in propagating St Gregory's ideas in those early centuries when they meant so much for Christendom. And once more we cannot do better than quote Abbot Butler.

"St Augustine and his monks brought the Rule to England and their monastery of SS Peter and Paul (later St Augustine's) in Canterbury, established in 600, was the first Benedictine monastery outside

Italy* of which authentic record exists. And it was in England that the first great Benedictine developments took place. This was not only in Kent . . . but also in the northern parts of the country, where it was introduced in the second half of the seventh century by Wilfrid at Ripon and by Benet Biscop at Wearmouth and Jarrow, both having learned the practice of the Benedictine Rule and life, not only in Kent, but also during their travels abroad, at Rome and elsewhere. By 700 the Benedictine Rule was followed universally throughout the Saxon parts of England, but not yet in the British and Celtic parts."†

It was the sacking by the Lombards of the original Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino which sent St Benedict's monks to Rome, and, probably, provided Gregory with the Rule which he sent into England by Augustine, and which had such far-reaching results for us—producing scholars like Bede, and, indeed, the other makers of our civilization and education. It is pleasant to learn that a hundred years later we repaid our debt to St Benedict's monastery among the Italian hills.

" After lying a solitude for nearly a century and a half, Monte Cassino was restored early in the eighth century. On the suggestion of Pope Gregory II, Petronax of Brescia repaired to Monte Cassino in 717, and finding there a few simple men living a semi-eremitical life, he joined them and became their senior.

* The legends about foreign foundations in St Benedict's time—St Maurus, etc.—have been disproved by modern scholarship.—Author's note.

† Cardinal Gasquet argues that " the Rule of St Benedict was introduced into Lindisfarne by St Cuthbert himself " (*The Mission of St Augustine,* preface, p. vii).—Author's note.

Recruits came, and among them, in 729, the young Saxon, Willibald, on his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He found only a few monks under Petronax, and having passed his youth, from five to twenty, in one of the well-organized monasteries in England, he was dissatisfied with the effort at Benedictine life he saw at Monte Cassino, and threw himself into the work of instructing them in 'the right constitution' of a Benedictine monastery and 'the norm of cenobite life.' He stayed there for ten years, till sent by the Pope to help St Boniface in Germany, holding some of the principal offices in the monastery. Petronax lived for another ten years, and if he left Monte Cassino fully organized in community and in buildings, and started on its course as the principal Benedictine monastery in the world, this, it seems, is to be attributed to the inspiration of the English Willibald.

"I hope it is not national vanity that makes it appear to me that during the later half of the seventh century and the eighth a predominant place in the Benedictine world was held by the monks of England. Two great Benedictine types were produced in England at this time: the apostles Wilfrid, Willibrord, and, above all, Boniface; and the first, and for ever typical Benedictine scholar, Bede. . . . I do not think it is a fancy, for Abbot Tosti seems to have perceived the same truth in a passage wherein he says that 'in England the Benedictine Order got blood and nerve from the strong race of the Anglo-Saxons.'"*

And so we leave the reader with, we hope, some definite ideas on mysticism. And from those Bene-

* *San Benedetto,* chapter x, 8.

dictine Abbots of long ago we refer him to the Abbot from whom we quote on the first page of this study: for now he will, perhaps, appreciate more deeply the very penetrating paragraph with which we open, and will realize that mysticism is only a more vivid and intense aspect of that need for God which belongs to the very condition of our existence, and which none of us can afford to disregard.

CHAPTER VI

MARTYRDOM

"WHETHER MARTYRDOM IS AN ACT OF THE GREATEST PERFECTION?"*

"*NOW of all virtuous acts martyrdom is the greatest proof of the perfection of charity: since a man's love for a thing is proved to be so much the greater according as that which he despises for its sake is more dear to him, or that which he chooses to suffer for its sake is more odious. But it is evident that of all the goods of the present life man loves life itself most, and, on the other hand, he hates death more than anything, especially when it is accompanied by the pain of bodily torment. . . . And from this point of view it is clear that martyrdom is the most perfect of human acts in respect of its genus, as being the sign of the greatest charity; according to John xv, 13: 'Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'*"

"Whether Faith alone is the Cause of Martyrdom?"—"*A Christian is one who is Christ's. Now a person is said to be Christ's not only through having faith in Christ, but also because he is actuated to virtuous deeds by the spirit of Christ. . . . Hence to suffer*

* *Summa*, IIa-IIae, Q. 124, Art. 2 and 5.

as a Christian is not only to suffer in confession of the Faith, which is done by words, but also to suffer for doing any good work, or for avoiding any sin, for Christ's sake, because this all comes under the head of witnessing to the Faith."

"THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"

The Catholic Church—the Church of the Son of God crucified—has always regarded her martyrs as the very flower of sanctity. Before the days of formal canonization, the baptism of blood raised men and women to the altar. The Feast of All Saints was originally the commemoration of those "unknown soldiers" of Christ whose bodies were brought from the Catacombs in twenty-eight cart-loads and deposited in the Pantheon when Boniface IV consecrated it as a Christian church.

"You know not what you ask," says Jesus to the disciples who want the highest place in heaven. "Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of, or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?" But he promises them that they shall be.

Later, in his glory, the thought is still in his mind. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life," he says to one of the seven churches.

"*Rex gloriose Martyrum,*" his Church calls him; but she thinks of him not only as waiting in heaven to crown the victors, but as fighting among his martyrs —"*Tu vincis inter Martyres.*"

But he himself goes even further than this. To Saul coming away from the stoning of Stephen, still breathing out threatenings and slaughter, comes the voice out of the dazzling glory. "Saul, Saul, why

persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus, *whom thou persecutest.*"

A PARADOX

And yet—strange paradox!—of all the canonized saints, the martyrs are the most *ordinary,* as far as spiritual mentality or temperament goes. One might say that they were just *Catholics in the heroic degree.* They were people like ourselves, who believed what we believe, loved life as much as we do, disliked the thought of death as much as we disliked it, and who—when the ultimate test came—were completely faithful to their belief and to their conscience, preferring death rather than life bought at the price of denial or compromise. Although martyrdom is, as St Thomas says, "the most perfect of human acts," we may well hope that the majority of us would prove faithful if the test came. There is nothing intrinsically improbable in this statement: whereas it would be absurd to say that the majority of us could be "canonized saints" if we tried. Temperament, genius, particular spiritual aptitudes were most certainly involved in the case of most of the canonized saints.

By saying this we in no way undervalue the power of grace. To begin with, the saints were equally under the bondage of original sin (which is a theological fact), and of its consequences (which is a psychological fact). And they certainly underwent greater trials and temptations than we do.

But to say that *grace* made the rich diversity of saints out of the constituent elements of flesh and blood, human soul, goodwill, and fiery trial, *irrespective* of natural temperament, would be like expecting

the sun to fall through a window of plain glass, and splash the church pavement with red and gold and purple; or a great musician to produce diverse kinds of music with one type of musical instrument. Either God chose *fitting* instruments and sanctified them to his particular purposes; or—why not?—created them on purpose. Each soul, theology teaches us, is made directly by God. God is the supreme artist, as we can see by looking at nature. Why should we suppose that he daily turns out hundreds of shapeless, meaningless little souls—mass-production of spirit—to be formed entirely by the hereditary tendencies of their bodies and the force of environment?

But that is by the way. Our present point is that the majority of canonized saints are peculiar people, anyhow; and that we can scarcely judge them by our own standards, or understand them as we understand our friends. And, as spiritual writers often tell us, we must beware of imitating them in detail. It seems to us, however, that all this does not apply to the majority of the martyrs. Psychologically, they are in another category. To repeat the blunt observation with which we started, they are much more *ordinary*.

Now very likely this statement strikes the reader as peculiarly inappropriate—that is, if the reader has not made a study of the martyrs.

His Catholic instinct tells him that martyrdom is one of the supreme graces—a golden door that opens straight into heaven. He naturally—and rightly—thinks of them with awe and veneration.

Also it is possible that the word "martyrdom" has a set of associations in his unconscious mind which he has collected, not from reading the lives of the martyrs,

but from the sayings of certain mystics whose lives have been very much more prominent in hagiography than those of any of the men and women who actually suffered martyrdom. It is an undeniable fact that many of the saints had a real thirst for martyrdom; prayed earnestly for it; did extraordinary bodily penances by way of a living martyrdom; loved to dwell on all the most harrowing details of Christ's passion, dreaming, at the same time, of some day sharing them. It was a perfectly sincere attitude of mind, a genuine thirst for suffering. It was, of course, highly mystical, and is beyond our comprehension, though we believe it must have had its value in the eyes of God.

But it is a curious fact that on the whole in the actual martyrs we do not find this thirst for crucifixion, these supplications for martyrdom. Their sayings contain no such sentiments; fierce mortifications were no part of their spiritual programme. And an even more curious fact is that, though God poured out his graces lavishly on the mystics we have mentioned, and seems to have granted their prayers often to the point of miracle, he withheld that for which they had so often asked—the martyr's crown.

Certainly, in each case we can think of, he took great liberties with them at their last end, as if to acknowledge their generosity in so constantly offering up their death. But he withholds the crown of martyrdom, almost as if to teach us that *this* is not the spiritual road by which the martyrs travelled. For this *exalté,* self-crucified state of mind is possible to very few; while true martyrdom is possible to *all.* One is a mystical experience, the other an extremely

objective and material experience. One is an extraordinary state of the soul which few will ever know, the other is a thing which might happen to any one of us, and which, at all events, we ought to be prepared to face, even though the possibilities are remote. Finally, the psychology of the one is abnormal, and of the other so ordinary that it comes into the everyday life of every follower of Christ. When our Lord told us to take up our cross *daily*, he meant it. But since he could not possibly have meant "suffer heroically for the Faith daily," we can only conclude that he meant *bear all the little (and great) hardships cheerfully* which are involved in being a follower of Christ and not of the world. This attitude seemed to St Francis so entirely desirable that he told Brother Leo, in that strange shouted conversation along the Perugia road, that it would be "perfect joy" if all the members of the Order had such dispositions.

It is necessary, then, if we would view the martyrs as they really were, to think of them quite apart from all the sayings and feelings which the word "martyrdom" may have unconsciously linked up with it. It seems to us that a glance at the would-be-martyr mystics is the best way of tackling our subject; not only in order to disconnect the association, but because, as we shall see farther on, they serve to emphasize the fact that real, God-given suffering is always unexpected, unsought, harder than anything that was imagined or desired. It brings out the fact that the real martyr's typical attitude—"Not my will, but thine, be done"—is the soundest as well as the most Christlike way of awaiting suffering, and, psychologically, a better preparation than being in

love with pain. All the saints, we imagine, discovered this sooner or later; and it seems to us that it was just as hard a lesson for those who had loved suffering, as for those who had a normal dread of it.

THE THIRST FOR MARTYRDOM

"I used to discuss with my brother," says St Teresa, "how we could become martyrs. We made up our minds to start together begging our way, for the love of God, to the country of the Moors, so that we might be beheaded there."* And they did, in fact, start, but were caught and taken home.

It might be said that this was only a childish enthusiasm, were it not for the fact that after the intervening years of worldliness as a young girl, of tepidity as a nun, of dryness as a saint-in-the-making, of perplexity as an ecstatic, St Teresa finally emerged into peace of soul and tireless activity of body, and finds herself once more in the dispositions of the little martyrdom-seeker of long ago; for who can doubt her complete sincerity when she says, "Suffering alone can make life tolerable to me. My greatest desire is to suffer. Often and often I cry out to God from the depths of my soul: Lord, either to suffer or to die is all I ask of thee."†

And yet, for all the oft-recurring words about suffering, she is not quite true to the type of would-be martyr. For one thing, her nature was too complex; and besides, she was much too busy with the big bit of work our Lord very mercifully provided for her.

Still, the idea belongs essentially to the Carmelite

* Her *Life*, i, 4. † *Ibid*, 351.

philosophy of life, and one is tempted to look for its dim beginnings—and also for the secret of the strange theory of spiritual detachment which was developed to its logical extreme by St John of the Cross—in the pre-Christian contemplatives to which Carmel traces back its family tree.

Anyway, St Teresa's spiritual children inherited their great mother's thirst for martyrdom, and two of the most perfect specimens we have of saints of this type are the first little saint she produced and the last—St John of the Cross, little in body, and Sœur Thérèse, "The Little Flower."

"John, what shall I give thee, for all thou hast done and suffered for me?" said a voice in the empty church, as the little saint prayed before a picture of Christ crucified. John had always distrusted "locutions," and so he ignored the voice, even when it spoke a second time. But the third time was too much for him, and he cried out that dearest wish of his heart—"To suffer and be held in contempt for thy sake."

"It was what he always longed for," adds his biographer, "and was the only wish of his heart on earth, and was now about to be granted him."

"He thirsted for suffering 'as the hart longs for the fountains where the water rises,' and was in the habit of saying, 'he knows nothing who knows not how to suffer for the love of God!'"*

He used to pray for three things: (1) To have no office in the Order, and a harsh superior; (2) to suffer for the love of God; (3) to die in humiliation and unknown.

* *Life of St John of the Cross,* by D. Lewis, p. 240.

On September 6, 1910, a small group of devout people stood about the grave of the Little Flower, as her coffin was carefully raised to the surface. " . . . Through the loose boards was seen, fresh and green as ever, the palm which had been laid upon the chaste remains of the servant of God, on October 4, 1897. Was not this a symbol of the immortal palm she had won by her martyrdom of self—that martyrdom of which she had written: 'I desire at all costs to win the palm of Agnes; if not by the shedding of blood, it must be by love.' "

On the day of her religious profession she prayed: " My God, give me martyrdom of soul or body . . . or, rather, give me both the one and the other!"

Even so objective and solidly medieval a saint as Antony of Padua thirsted for martyrdom. He joined the Franciscans out of envy of those reckless five who got themselves so horribly tortured in Morocco, and whose mangled bodies lay in the Church of the Canons on their way home. He got as far as the coast on his martyrdom quest, but fell sick of fever, and, seeing God's hand in it, resigned himself. But he did his best to let his life be a living death by burying himself in a little mountain priory, with no outlet for his extraordinary powers, but saying Mass for the brothers and washing up their dirty dishes. And yet there was nothing morbid about St Anthony—most attractive of saints—any more than there was about the Little Flower.

Probably the attitude of mind and the feelings of such saints are altogether beyond our powers of imagination. We can—and many of us did—live in imagination with the soldier who laughed his way

through those four years of blood and mud and shells, or the priest who prayed his way through—both of them with the genuine feeling that they would rather die than desert the cause their comrades had died for. But this *asking* for pain—and really and truly wanting it—we can't grasp. And yet we are all perfectly familiar with the idea.

Perhaps the book that has done more than any other in recent years to familiarize the ordinary lay Catholic with this view is the *Life of Fr. Doyle, S.J.* And among many other services that he rendered humanity throughout his devoted life this is a great one—that, by his courage, pertinacity, and also by his habit of writing self-revealing diaries, he has proved what is the ultimate and logical development of the thirst-for-martyrdom idea when allowed to work itself out to the end. For this reason we propose to quote a little from his *Life,* before passing on to the principal part of this study.

But before setting out on this rather cold and critical analysis, we should like to state that we do it in all reverence and sympathy, and as gently as may be; for who can have read his *Life* without having learnt to love "Father Willie Doyle"; without feeling profound admiration for his life of unremitting work and prayer; and a deep reverence for his love of our Lord. Apart from what we have said above, we are genuinely sorry that the privacy of this strange, passionate soul has been violated, and things never meant for human eye put into cold print. But it has been done; and since many thousands—probably millions—of people have read the puzzling records, writers on such questions must be allowed to treat them as dispassionately

as any other spiritual phenomena, leaving sentiment out of account.*

Fr. Doyle was no blind enthusiast, acting under sudden inspiration, without thought or reflection. What he did and thought was deliberate, and he not only wrote full records of his own spiritual doings, but read those of the saints. The same may be said of his biographer, who, indeed, fills the book with ascetical theology, quotations, and analogies. And it is interesting to note that, although the martyr-aspect of Fr. Doyle is what both he himself and his biographer are at pains to emphasize and explain, they draw very few of their quotations and analogies from the lives of actual martyrs, but chiefly from the type of saint we have mentioned—St Teresa, St John of the Cross, St Margaret Mary, St Thérèse of Lisieux.

Here are a few instances of Fr. Doyle's thirst for martyrdom :

As a boy he longed to be a martyr some day; as a novice he expressed this in a document written in his own blood promising to " commence my life of slow martyrdom." (There is a footnote to say St Margaret Mary did this once.) The thought grows in definiteness as his career proceeds. During his long retreat he volunteers for the Congo—and possible martyrdom. And during this and all his subsequent retreats we have endless prayers and resolutions with regard to his " martyr's life," and in 1911 a vow, binding under mortal sin, to be renewed each day.

* Fr. Doyle's letters of spiritual direction are very sound, and often deprecate eople attempting anything out of the ordinary in the way of mortification. We feel he would have been the last to wish these records to be put into the hands of young people, novices, converts, non-Catholics : that they are most certainly ***not his teaching***.

What exactly he thought our Lord was asking of him is pathetically revealed in a prayer he wrote down, or rather typed. "My dear, loving Jesus, what do you want from me? You never seem to leave me alone—thank you so much for that—but keep on asking, asking, asking. . . . You do not seem to be satisfied with me yet, and want more. . . . Let me tell you what I think this is. You want me to immolate myself to your pleasure; to become your victim by self-inflicted suffering; to crucify myself in every way I can think of; never, if possible, to be without some pain or discomfort; to die to myself. . . . (And there follows a list of all that he must "crucify" in himself.) "Jesus, you know my longing to become a saint. You know how much I thirst to die a martyr. Help me to prove that I am really in earnest by living this life of martyrdom. . . ."

Acts of mortification, failures, prayers, all were marked down in various books, "with minute precision, twenty different headings being marked each day. The mind which could stand this perpetual strain was of no ordinary type. It is a marvel that his joyous spirit never felt crushed by the sheer weight of spiritual book-keeping involved." But, in 1914, his spiritual theory had reached its logical development, and one feels the war was, in his case, a mercy. "During meditation," he writes, "Jesus made known to me a new life which he wants me to aim at in future, a life in which I am to seek only suffering, weariness, and pain." And in the list of what he is to do and not to do occurs the following: "I am to inflict as much pain on myself as I can, hence I must increase corporal penance."

Fr. Doyle's life was already ascetic in the extreme,

and his mortifications extravagant. But having accepted the principle, "I must inflict on myself as much pain as I can," he set out on a programme of self-torture that cannot be justified on any grounds. We hesitate to mention the doings contained in the pages called *Holy Follies*. Still, as this is a study of the psychology of would-be martyrs, it would not be fair to our readers not to give them a glimpse of the practical developments of the notion. Here, then, is a bare list of some of the pain this poor, ardent lover of Christ inflicted on himself, and felt impelled to record in a chance-written document, "penned under what he believed to be God's inspiration":

Praying in cold cellars for long hours, sometimes with arms outstretched till he could no longer bear the pain, or tied in the form of a cross. Standing up to his neck in a pond at 3 a.m. praying for sinners. Scourging with a chain, or branches covered with long thorns. Once, with a scourge made of safety-razor blades, which cut to the bone, and the blood ran down his body "till a small pond had formed on the floor," and he ceased through prudence. Wearing the chain, heated, so that it raised blisters. Rolling, naked, in furze bushes. Forcing through a thorn hedge. Frequently walking barefoot on thorns and nettles, and once, naked, among "a forest of old nettles," so that his body was a mass of agonizing blisters, and the doctor took a very serious view of his condition. And always, at every moment, in everything, constant denial of self even in necessaries like food, sleep, warmth, rest.

Here is a comment on all this, taken from the same letters quoted elsewhere in this book:

"As to Fr. Doyle, and his seeking after rather extravagant forms of pain, I think such phenomena must be explained as a form of artistic self-expression, which has probably been denied other outlets. You can't approve of such things in principle; you can only say that such and such a saint did them by 'special inspiration'—extravagances of divine love. Self-expression in short; even (if you like to be severe) a sort of self-gratification. Its psychological motive, of course, is to be as like Christ as possible—a thirst to share in his pain; still, it's quite certain Christ didn't do things like that himself, and wouldn't have counted it as anything but loving folly in others.

"The suffering that belongs to 'Perfect Joy' is the suffering that just happens.

"So I think Doyle's romantic quest of suffering (*i.e.*, in *civil* life) was just as, and no more, pleasing to God than writing mystical poetry or composing a Mass."

But our Lord, who knows the secrets of hearts, gave him his chance to show his love heroically, and even to die a bloody death. And here, once more thanks to the intimacy of his diaries and letters, and the complete *honesty* of the man, we learn what we may already have guessed in other instances—that when God, himself, sends suffering, with his own secret knowledge of what will hurt *most,* the heroic soul who had prayed for pain is shaken with the agony, and sees that all the self-chosen and self-inflicted sufferings were but a pious game after all; the soul then, for the first time, tastes something of the pain of the martyrs; begins to distrust self, as they did; and the short time in that crucible of God affects the character,

the eternal soul, more than all the years of self-imposed penance put together.

On 17th February, 1916, his call to the Front came. And the thought of imminent death, the bitterness of partings, the discomforts of the new life, the horrors and agonies of the trenches, were as repugnant to him as to other men, and he expressed his shrinking more intimately than others did—even while outwardly he behaved with such astonishing heroism. But he expressed something else, too, which makes the spiritual letters of this period, though few and far between, of special interest. A Christmas letter written to his sister after a year of life at the Front contains such phrases as the following: "It was only after a time that I began to understand that God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts." "God has come into my life in a way he never did before. He has put strange thoughts into my head and given me many lights which I feel have changed my whole outlook upon life." "God is preparing me without a chance of refusal for the work he wants doing." He speaks of "the absolute sacrifice of even our desires, so that his will alone may be done." In October he had written "I am slowly learning the lesson Jesus brought me out here to teach me. The first and greatest is that I must have no will of my own, only his, and this in all things. It is hard to let everyone walk on you, even your own servant; but Jesus asks this and I try to let him arrange all as he pleases. Result: yesterday I got no dinner. . . ." One feels he has rediscovered the "Third Degree," which during his Long Retreat

he had felt was God's will for him, and solemnly vowed to aim at, entering in his diary the following definition given him by his director—a very holy old father whom he revered deeply. "Father Petit told me that the spirit of the Third Degree is not so much the practice of austerities as the denial of one's will and judgement and perfect abnegation of self, and humility. This is the spirit of our rules which are simply the Third Degree." And he is struck at seeing the men practise it so perfectly. "When I give my next retreat, I think I shall try the experiment of a few supperless and bedless nights on them, just to see what they would say, and compare notes with the soldiers." And he had discovered a new motive for voluntary hardships. "The officers, from captain up, have horses; but I prefer to foot it with my boys, for I know they like it, and besides I don't see why I should not share a little of their hardship."

And there is another idea which recurs several times in the letters of this period: he speaks of the new suffering as a "noviceship." "I feel, oh so strongly, that I am going through a kind of noviceship, a sort of spiritual training, for some big work he wants me to do in the future. . . ." "I have the conviction, growing stronger every day, that nothing serious will befall me. . . . Otherwise why would he impress so strongly on my mind that this noviciate out here is only the preparation for my real life's work."

This strange premonition of future work for which this present agony is "spiritual training," sets one speculating. For after another year of fidelity

and courage in doing the same work as so many other brave priests, and sharing the same "hell" in which millions of men, good and bad, were plunged, he was killed, as many another man was killed, ministering to a wounded comrade. Was it, perhaps, the same "work" which the Little Flower felt convinced our Lord would let her do in heaven? She felt very strongly about it—she could not bear the idea of going to eternal *rest*. And this idea of "training"—was it a little revelation that the work of heaven is reserved for the "heroic" on earth?

And so we close our study of the would-be martyrs —strange souls whom we cannot understand, but whom we must reverence for their heroic love of God.

THE HUMAN AND THE DIVINE ASPECT OF THE MARTYRS

"There is no act of perfection," says St Thomas, "which is a matter of counsel, but what in certain cases is a matter of precept, as being necessary for salvation. Hence it is not contrary to the perfection of martyrdom if, in certain cases, it be necessary for salvation."*

This gives us the theological sanction for our suggestion that every good Catholic is a potential martyr. And it also explains how this does not take away from the *perfection* of martyrdom.

Now these considerations bring us to one conclusion: that of all the saints we must recognize the martyrs as our chief models and examples. Hence we must study their lives as well as their deaths; we must see how it was that they were "found faithful"

* *Summa*, II-II, Q. 124, Art. 2. Reply to Obj. 1.

when the great day came. And if we find much human nature, no thirst for martyrdom, and even a little shrinking from pain and death, we shall know that they were indeed people like ourselves. But when we see their clear grasp of essentials, their unwavering stand for principles, their sensitiveness to the voice of conscience, their lonely display of the "courage of their convictions," their choice of God rather than self, even though it cost them their lives—then we shall know that they were people not like us.

That, we might say, is the human aspect of the martyrs. But there is also a divine aspect. And St Thomas gives us the clue to this also (in another part of the *Summa* altogether.*) He is writing of how the Son is invisibly sent by the Father to dwell in us. "The invisible mission takes place also as regards progress in virtue or increase of grace. Hence Augustine says (*De Trin.*, iv) that 'The Son is sent to each one when he is known and perceived by anyone . . . whether journeying towards God, or united perfectly to him.' Such invisible mission, however" (adds St Thomas), "chiefly occurs as regards anyone's proficiency in the performance of a new act, or in the acquisition of a new state of grace; as, for example, the proficiency in reference to the gift of miracles or of prophecy, or in the fervour of charity leading a man to expose himself to the danger of martyrdom, or to renounce his possessions, or to undertake any arduous work."

This passage is important in reference to *all* the saints—and, indeed, in reference to ourselves in as far as we are active or dedicated in Christ's service. But for the moment we will regard it in its application to

* *Summa*, I, Q. XLIII, Art. 6.

the martyrs. For according to St Thomas, the willingness of men to accept martyrdom is a new coming and dwelling of Christ in them. We may reasonably, then, look for other Christ-characteristics in the martyrs in a special degree. Christ's personality keeps its own characteristics throughout the ages. Christ suffering in his saints should be perfectly recognizable as the Christ who suffered in Palestine under Pontius Pilate. And, indeed, this is so in a very marked degree.

As we come to study the lives of a few of the great martyrs more or less in detail, this assimilation to Christ during his Passion will be noticeable. But first to return to our point about the martyrs being like us.

It is the little human touches which make them seem indeed our brothers, make them seem so much more comprehensible than many of the other saints. We even dare to say, there are about the martyrs—even about their last hours—little touches of ordinariness that specially endear them to us: things that we can so well understand, and that help us to think of these blessed heroes of Christ with a sympathy as genuine as if we were thinking of our own friends.

Look, for instance, at Blessed Thomas More. A messenger has come to his room in the Beauchamp Tower to tell him that he is to die before 9 o'clock that morning. Long and perfect has been his preparation; the bitterness has been faced, and peace has followed. It is the moment for the consummation of all his suffering, the day he is to receive his crown. And yet we find him worried by a very natural little problem. What dress shall he wear, he asks himself—his old one of frieze, or the new one of silk

camelot that someone had sent him while in prison? He decides on the one of silk camelot, and hurriedly arrays himself. And then the Lieutenant of the Tower comes in and advises the old one of frieze, since it will fall to the lot of the executioner (even as that other garment, woven from the top throughout). And there is a little argument; and the blessed martyr yields and changes his gown.

Or look at the proto-martyrs of the Reformation. The monks of the Charterhouse had at first refused to take the Oath of Succession. The prior and one of his monks were at once sent to the Tower, where they were persuaded by theologians of repute that they could lawfully take it with the condition attached "as far as the law of Christ permits." But early in the next year came the Act of Supremacy, declaring Henry the Supreme Head of the Church in England. About this the good Fathers saw that no compromise was possible, and the preparations of the whole community for possible death are very touching. But they were no martyrdom-seekers. Even after the preparations, after the prior's prophetic dream, even after the miraculous consolation during the Mass of the Holy Ghost, the prior, "hoping against hope, resolved to make one last appeal to Cromwell, to see if by chance he and his brethren might be exempted from the oath and allowed to serve God in peace. He, therefore, went with two brother-priors, who had come to London to consult him, to visit the terrible vice-regent." (Cannot we see the little party, slightly nonplussed by the bustling politicians, but calm and recollected and coming in all good faith and simplicity to interview the man in power?) "When they pleaded the laws of the Catholic Church as their

reason for refusing the oath, Cromwell roughly answered: 'What do I care for the Church?'"

It is exactly what we should expect any superior in our own day to do; and we can see him, urged on by the hopeful colleagues from the provinces, silencing his own sad certainty, leaving aside even the divine revelations, and doing the thing that is ordinary and prudent and due to the men under his care. If he had lived in our day, and gone, clad in rather shabby black coat and trousers, and talked like that to a rather Bolshevist minister, the said minister might well have made the same answer; but, being English, would, in these days, probably have let the community off. And we should never have known the intense heroism latent in those men. But Cromwell did not let them off. And a good many of the community were starved till they died in a dungeon, standing upright in chains, while Prior Houghton himself, and several others, were dragged on hurdles to Tyburn and hanged.

"O most holy Jesus, have mercy on me in this hour," he said, as the executioner's knife ripped open his frail old body. And as the rough hand was laid on his heart, to tear it out, "Good Jesus," he whispered, "what will ye do with my heart?"

They were saints and heroes, those Carthusians. But, if the need arose, probably London could produce such again.

Here is the story of another heroic superior and his companions. There is a homely incident in their very passion that seems to bring them close. During the struggle between William of Orange and Philip II of Spain, nineteen Catholics were cast into the dungeon of the citadel of Gorcum. Eleven were Franciscans

and the rest secular priests. For two days and nights they were crowded together like sheep, with neither fresh air nor light, and the assurance of their captors that they would in the end be hanged. All day Friday they were unvisited even by the gaoler, and were faint with hunger and weariness. Some were for making a pretended submission to the heretics, though Nicholas Piek, the Franciscan Guardian, strove nobly to keep the little band united. At dusk, footsteps sounded without; the door was flung open, and a savoury smell filled the dungeon. A captain of William's army entered. Mockingly he bid them partake of the supper—"good Protestant meat"—which if they refused because it was Friday, so much the worse for them.

It was obvious, of course, that their condition dispensed them from abstinence; but when Piek suggested that they refuse the food rather than give the enemy occasion to blaspheme, there was general assent —even from the waverers. The captain withdrew, vowing that they should most certainly be hanged, and the supper was removed, untouched. And hanged they were, after a great deal of suffering. But there is something in that little touch about their faithfulness to Friday abstinence which seems to bring them nearer than the mocking of the crowd, the burlesque *asperges* with mops and pails and blasphemous chanting, and the hanging that took all night to kill them. There was no romance, no spiritual exaltation about nineteen tired and hungry men saying "No, thank you," to a good supper: there was just the ordinary Catholic instinct of observing this little obligation, especially before Protestants (who do not understand

that gentle considerateness is as real a part of the Church as love of regularity). And yet it was one of the really heroic moments in their passion.

Everyone is familiar with the story of St Thomas à Becket's death, but to most he is merely an historical figure. As one follows the tragic story of his last few days on earth, there is a moment in which he seems very human—the moment when, in the darkness that preceded the dawn of his last day, he seems to have thought of flight.

It is no less human, and very comforting, that the next day he ate well at dinner, and talked pleasantly with Prior Robert of Merton, his old schoolmaster, and the other guests. And that afternoon the deed was done.

Probably in every martyr there was this double aspect—the human attitude towards death, sometimes shrinking, sometimes almost reckless, and the divine —a true oneness with Christ, a readiness to obey "the will of the Father." The psychology of martyrdom is as interesting as the psychology of any other aspect of sanctity. But, as a rule, the martyrs are written about from what might be called the objective point of view. The writer is concerned with the historical cause of the martyr's death. He does not trouble as to what it felt like to be a martyr. Perhaps there is a certain unconscious cowardice in modern writers and their readers. They shrink from sharing by imagination in such pain. It was not so in less sensitive days. Martyrologies were among the most popular books of spiritual reading. It is interesting to note that the little list of books which Gregory the Great sent to England with the first party of missionaries includes

a martyrology. St Boniface, writing home for more books, begs the Abbess Eadburga to have "the Acts of the Martyrs" copied out and sent to him. In very early days the Acts of the Martyrs were so multiplied and wonderfully embellished by resourceful scribes that the Church had to legislate very strictly about it, and we find, as early as 494, Pope Gelasius I putting the "Passion of St George" on the index, so to speak. It is possible that this sort of thing produced a complex in the human portion of the mind of the Church! Anyway, it is time we studied our martyrs rather more sympathetically.

THREE GREAT MARTYRS

There are three famous martyrs who stand for the three main periods of European history—the conversion of the barbarians, the power of the feudal barons, and the Reformation. They also stand for three great types of martyr—the man who dies directly for the Faith, the man who dies for the rights of Holy Church, and the man who dies for conscience' sake. Probably each of these men was the most famous martyr of his age, so that all Europe was talking of his death. As it happens, all three were Englishmen. Their names are Boniface, à Becket, and Sir Thomas More.

ST BONIFACE

In another chapter we sketch the life and character of St Boniface.* Here we will speak only of his death.

A foreknowledge of their death seems to have been

* See Chapter VII.

a pretty universal characteristic of the martyrs. And from this point of view St Boniface is particularly interesting.

As Vicar of the Vicar of Christ, and probably the most influential man in the Europe of his time, beloved as well by kings as by his clergy and the common folk to whom he had given the Faith, there was, humanly speaking, not the least likelihood of martyrdom as the final act in the great drama of his life.

An old man, surely very weary by now, and constantly laid low by sickness; the father of innumerable spiritual children who must have been his delight and solace; the master-mind behind the kinglets and the bishops who were building up Northern Europe—to live and gently watch developments until a peaceful death should overtake him, such, we may fancy, would have been his choice. And yet—we know not how—God made known to him that his reward was to be a martyr's crown. And as "his hour" drew near, it remained only for him to go out, as Christ went out, to his Gethsemani, where the murderous band should come out, "as against a thief, with swords and clubs."

It was surely in this spirit, and not in the spirit of an enthusiastic martyrdom-seeker, or in the adventurous zeal of his youth, that the aged archbishop set out once more for the scene of his first heroic efforts.

As he felt his end approaching—from his failing health, so men thought—he had made all arrangements so that his death should cause no confusion, bring no trouble upon his priests. In a letter to an influential man at the French Court—practically a letter to Pepin himself—he begs for the protection of his disciples and for the appointment of Bishop

Lullus in his place. This was done, and Boniface found himself freed of the vast load of care that had weighed so long upon him.

He now turned to the more personal preparations for his departing; and here we find a touch of that human kindliness which so often appears in the martyrs when one might think their hearts would be set solely on heaven.

Lioba, the brave English nun who had sailed across the stormy north seas to share his apostleship, was not forgotten now that he was to receive his martyr's crown. He went to say good-bye, and perhaps they talked of his coming martyrdom; and she must have asked for a personal keepsake, for he gave her his cowl. And perhaps she asked for another favour, for before he departed, he left instructions that her body was to be buried near his in the Church of Fulda.

"Prepare all things for my journey," he wrote to Lullus, "and do not forget to enclose with my books a shroud, to contain my mortal remains." And so he set out.

His preaching was as successful as ever; large numbers of pagans were converted. June 5, the Vigil of Pentecost, was chosen for their baptism day.

It was as Boniface sat reading in his tent on the Plain of Dokkum, awaiting the neophytes, that news was brought of a fierce armed band surrounding the camp. The laymen in his company were for fighting, but he bade them sheathe their swords. And even while he spoke the enemy rushed upon them. Instinctively, Boniface raised his arm to shelter his head, and the pagan sword cut through the book of the Gospels which he held. At the same time, a dagger stabbed his heart.

One can imagine the thrill which must have run through the people of those wild north lands at the news that their apostle had won his martyr's crown, and the patriotic pride with which the English Church entered him in her calendar as one of her national patrons.*

Perhaps of all the martyrs, Boniface is the pre-eminent example of martyrdom coming as the reward of a long life of toil. One seems to get a glimpse of things from God's point of view. And one must bear the principle in mind and apply it to tragic cases like the young mother, Perpetua, or the aged Carthusians of London. Again, the martyr's open-eyed acceptance of God's will is more than usually evident in the story of St Boniface.

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

The Church's task of converting semi-barbarous Europe into Christendom, if arduous, was, in essence, simple. That a man should preach to barbarians till they beat him on the head or stabbed him is as sublimely simple as it is suitable to the age, and natural in a follower of Christ crucified. That, indeed, is how the Church spread itself in those days; and St Boniface is a very literal instance of the famous saying about the blood of martyrs being seed. Less than twenty years after his death, another Englishman, Willehad, was kneeling on the Plain of Dokkum, kissing the ground sanctified by the martyr's blood, and rising up with a miraculous gift of eloquence and zeal, which ended in his creating a new Christian nation called the Old Saxons, and building himself

* Lingard.

a cathedral under the kindly encouragement of Charlemagne.

But four hundred years later, when it was quite obvious that Europe was the Faith and the Faith was Europe, things were not so simple. The sword that crashed through Becket's skull was the sword, not of a barbarian, but of a Christian baron; nevertheless, Becket was a martyr, and all Europe was out talking of his martyrdom.

The enormous popularity of St Thomas à Becket is one of the mysterious things of history. He did not die for a popular cause. It wasn't the people's quarrel. But it was the people who canonized him; the people who flocked to his shrine year after year until the Reformation. With that mysterious perspicacity of a Catholic people, they knew, somehow, that he stood for England and the Faith.

"MOST MIGHTY IN ENGLAND"*

What sort of man was St Thomas of Canterbury? We know a great deal about him—his life was written by more than one of his friends. We have words and letters of his own. He lived in an age of extreme objectivity, where a man revealed himself by his actions and not by writing his own biography. To study his life is to begin, a little, to understand the martyrs. He has, in him, many traits which one finds again in all those who finally shed their blood for Christ.

It was on Holy Innocents' Day that he entered into his Gethsemani, and it was a fitting day, for his story begins with the clean and innocent life of his youth.

* Contemporary Chronicle.

He loved God's sunlight, a good horse, a swift hawk, and clean laughter; but "in the midst of a roistering, careless society, he lived a life as pure as on the day he was born." But he seems as yet to have had no consciousness that he was destined to do and suffer great things for God.

The next thing one notices about him is that without possessing what is usually understood by ambition, he still made the most of his gifts, not merely taking opportunities, but working with a steady perseverance to fit himself to advance by an ever-ascending series of promotions. Real worth and real gifts seldom go unrecognized, and from the highest positions of trust and responsibility in Archbishop Theobald's brilliant train, he became, at the age of thirty-eight, Lord Chancellor of England and intimate friend of the king.

There is in all the martyrs a sort of high-handed way of never counting the cost where a Christian principle or the good of the kingdom of God is concerned. It was this attitude that ended in their paying their life-blood; but it shows itself all through their lives. Thomas was always ready to take any pains in order to insure the success of an undertaking; to resort to most extreme measures if these seemed necessary.

For instance, at the height of his success in Theobald's train, just when honours and positions were beginning to shower upon him, and there were influential friends to keep in with, and influential enemies to be watched, he obtained the Archbishop's leave, and vanished from England for a year, putting himself to school in Bologna that he might become really proficient in Canon Law.

The same characteristic showed itself when he went to France on a diplomatic errand for the King of England. He realized that the best possible way of insuring success was to make a splash. The overwhelming extravagance of this journey—the vast retinue, the costly presents, the hundreds of knights and men-at-arms, singing as they went—reads like a story from the Arabian Nights. "And last of all the great, keen-faced Chancellor himself, surrounded by friends, towering a foot above his fellows on his huge horse, with silver bit and chains, ablaze with colour and jewels."* The French were enormously impressed, as Thomas had intended they should be.

But to throw up all this pomp when occasion required, and embrace asceticism and prayer, this also Thomas à Becket was ready to do.

There came the strange day when the King announced that it was his will Thomas should fill the vacant See of Canterbury. All through, of course, Becket's sympathies had been with the Church, though, as Chancellor, he had been a servant of the State, and obliged to patch up compromises that should be, if possible, to the advantage of both. But it was not easy, seeing the load of injustice which Norman tyranny had brought upon the Church.

If the King's proposal staggered Thomas, it was not that he cared little to throw in his lot with the Church; it was rather that he knew what it would mean. He knew the circumstances, he knew the King—above all, he knew himself. At first he laughed.

"Why, look at my dress!" he said. "Is this the

* *St Thomas of Canterbury*, by Mgr. Benson (from which all subsequent quotations are taken).

kind of man, sir, you would set over monks and churchmen?"

Henry persisted. Then Thomas spoke the unvarnished truth: "I tell you, sir, that if you do this thing, you will bitterly regret it. You say you love me now. Well, that love will turn to hatred."

Not without much persuasion, and from others than the King, did Thomas yield. But the responsibility once accepted, he threw all himself into the task.

The great day of consecration arrived. There was music, there were glittering, jewelled vestments, lights, relics, incense; but the man in the centre of it all walked in deep humility of heart, the hair-shirt of a penitent upon him—though this was known only to God and his confessor.

As he left the hall on that great day the jesters clamoured for largess. But he smiled as he shook his head. "I am not he who was Chancellor," he told them. Gradually he changed everything. His rich garments were laid aside for a monk's habit, a white surplice, and the black cloak of an Augustinian. He wore his stole always, even while he slept. There were no longer those sumptuous feasts, with, often, the King as guest. Simple meals now, with the Scriptures read. Nightly he took the discipline, and, after a few hours' rest, rose for the Night Office. Then came the thirteen poor men, whom, after washing and kissing their feet, he served at breakfast. Up again betimes, to study Scripture with a few priests, and at nine o'clock his Mass. But often he deprived himself of saying it—to one who had been a layman all his life that honour seemed so great.

"AND I, TOO, WILL DIE FOR HIM WHEN THE TIME COMES"

All this made Henry uneasy. It surprised him. He did not understand that Thomas was but being true to himself, even as he had been in the days when his position demanded pomp and glory. The King had made him archbishop. An archbishop is God's man, not the King's, and must behave accordingly. And the King began to guess a little what it would mean.

Later, when the time came for striking—when the world seemed full of his enemies, and all but his own intimates and the common people were against him—he used his spiritual weapons with the completeness that was part of his nature. Excommunication fell suddenly and terribly on bishop and baron; they snarled back, at bay; they defied him; they wove long lies; they ran to Rome or to the French King; but he only struck again, and harder. He even laid England—his England—under an interdict until the King should yield. Even the Pope wondered if it was wise; but he did not know Henry, and Thomas did.

"But Thomas' ultimate strength lay . . . in his complete readiness to die for God's cause, instead of living for it, when the time came. So long as it was of any use he opposed strength to strength. . . . But when at last the hour struck when neither persuasion nor righteous wrath nor patience was of any avail, he marched, as we shall see, straight to death, knowing that, like his Lord himself, the time was gone by for using a scourge in the temple, and rebukes and

challenges—he must now submit himself to the scourge instead, and, laying aside all natural weapons in God's battle, he must take up the last and supreme supernatural weapon which never fails, the very cross of Calvary on which he is to die."

Almost from the beginning of the struggle he seems to have been aware what the end would be. But probably with the martyrs, the foreknowledge of their death was not a vivid, imaginative realization, but rather an intellectual notion, no more personal and painful than our ordinary thoughts of the four last things. All those who make a habit of reading the Gospels through from end to end will know well how, although "his hour" was ever in the mind of our Lord, it was only quite at the end of his ministry that he allowed it to take possession of his imagination, so to speak. One feels the difference keenly. And the utter bitterness of Gethsemani was comparatively brief. The martyrs almost all reproduce the main characteristics of Christ's sufferings, and especially this general foreknowledge, with a personal acceptance of God's will in the matter; a growing and ever more vivid certainty, as the time approaches, so that they seem as if they must speak of it now and then to those about them—as he did. And, finally, Gethsemani, and a terrible moment when the flesh shrinks, and the spirit, strengthened by God, fights desperately and wins.

In the very first tussle between Henry and the Archbishop, in the field outside Northampton, a strange little conversation took place.

"You are my man," cried the King. "I raised you from nothing, and you defy me."

"Peter, too, was raised from nothing, sir," answered the Archbishop, "yet he ruled the Church."

"Yes, but Peter died for his Lord."

"And I, too, will die for him when the time comes."

At a later and more terrible meeting, when it seemed as if the King's men would kill him then and there, he spoke to his intimate friends of "his crown," and to one who said, "This has been a bitter day," he replied, "The last will be more bitter." It was after this that Thomas rode away before dawn with three companions and escaped to France.

"He was led as a lamb to the slaughter," said the ancient prophets of Christ, and his martyrs, too, could show a profound humility. Before Thomas struck those fierce blows of which we have spoken, there was a moment when, in his exile, he seemed powerless. Coming before Henry and the French King, he threw himself at their feet.

"Sir," he cried, "have mercy on me! I throw myself on God and your Majesty, for his honour and yours." But Henry answered with hypocrisy, and the French King with a sneer (for which he afterwards apologized, be it said to his honour).

At last came the time when Thomas was persuaded to return to England. The Pope's envoys had had great influence with Henry. A reconciliation seemed to have been effected; yet it was significant that the kiss of peace was persistently omitted by the King. Though outwardly all seemed promising, Thomas himself knew that his hour had come. The King of France advised him not to trust himself in England till the kiss had been given. But Thomas made

answer: "God's will be done." And his last words to the Bishop of Paris were that "he was going to England to die."

The welcome with which the common folk and the clergy received him in England is only comparable to the sudden burst of welcome which Jerusalem gave to Jesus as he passed into the royal city for the last time. And with mysterious fitness these English people used the selfsame words that greeted the Saviour then:

"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

The bells pealed, great and ever-gathering crowds walked with him as he rode on into Canterbury.

The next few weeks were far from peaceful. And so they came to Christmas Day. He sang the Midnight Mass, and preached the next morning on the text, "*In terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.*"

"At one point in his sermon he broke down altogether, as he spoke of the bodies of the martyred archbishops that lay about him in the church, and hinted that another might soon lie there, too. A murmur of sorrow burst out from the crowd that listened."*

On St Stephen's Day he received a prophetic message from a hermit, concerning his approaching end. That day, too, he sent away on various errands those intimate friends who had been with him through all his troubles, and, like Christ, he seemed strangely deserted and alone. And that night, so we may believe, the bitterness of his Gethsemani began, and just for a moment he seems to have thought of flight.

* *Ibid.*, p. 32.

"At midnight he said matins privately with a few monks and priests; and when that was over stood for a long while looking out into the dark.

"Suddenly he turned to his friends, asking what was the hour, and whether it would be possible to reach Sandwich before daybreak. They told him 'yes'; but, seeming still to meditate, he said a few words in a low voice, as to the doing of God's will, and his own readiness to bear whatever was in store. Then presently he lay down for his last sleep on earth."

The next day his old spirits seemed to have returned, and to one who congratulated him, he said: "A man should be cheerful who goes to his Master."

That afternoon—with a storm thundering over the city—there was the fierce interview in his room with the four murderous knights.

After they had rushed out, to arm, "I am ready to die. . . . God's will be done," he said to his friends.

And so he passed along the cloisters—refusing to move unless his cross went before him—and came into the cathedral, where all was now confusion: frightened people crowding in; outside, the noise of armed men; within, the singing of Vespers; over all, the thunder.

When the four knights burst in, his friends tried to drag him up some steps.

"Leave me," he said sharply. "Let God dispose of me as he will."

The first blow wounded him, and he lifted his hand to his head. As he saw the blood upon it, he spoke as Christ spoke upon the cross: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." The third blow brought him to his knees, and as he sank slowly forward on his face, they heard him say:

"For the name of Jesus and the defence of the Church, I am ready to die."

The last blow severed the crown of his head—even as he had once seen in a dream. And, like the soldier with a lance who gave the dead Christ his fifth wound, a knight with his sword scattered the brains on the pavement, crying: "Let us go—the traitor is dead; he will rise no more."

* * * * *

"Without the Church," says Chesterton, "the Middle Ages would have had no law. . . . Many priests expounded and embellished the Roman law, and many priests supported Henry II. And yet there was another element in the Church, stored in its first foundations, like dynamite, and destined in every age to destroy and renew the world. An idealism akin to impossibilism ran down the ages parallel to all its political compromises. . . . St Thomas of Canterbury was a great visionary and a great revolutionist. . . . The possibilities or impossibilities of St Thomas à Becket were left a riddle for history; the white flame of his audacious theocracy was frustrated, and his work cut short like a fairy tale left untold. But his memory passed into the care of the common people. . . ."*

Chesterton sees a political result of Becket's martyrdom. But, be that as it may, is not the one explanation safe to apply to all the martyrs the explanation which Christ gave, not of the scandal of the cross alone, but of those who should "come after him": "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground

* *A Short History of England*, pp. 75-84.

die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." A prophecy like that, made by Christ himself, cannot possibly fail, especially in the case of a man whose sanctity was vindicated by such a host of miracles wrought at his tomb.

BLESSED THOMAS MORE

"It is to-morrow St Thomas' even, the octave of St Peter: and therefore to-morrow long I to go to God: it were a day very meet and convenient to me." So wrote Blessed Thomas More to his daughter the day before his death. And on the feast of the translation of the relics of St Thomas à Becket he died for the selfsame cause as the great Archbishop—he who also had been Chancellor of England and intimate friend of Henry the King. But these two great Englishmen were very different in character. If the one stands for combat, the other stands for conscience. And yet those things which characterize the martyrs are as evident in More as in Becket—a clean unworldliness even from youth, with a leaning for the consecrated life, even if, for a while, service must be rendered to Cæsar; an unobtrusive asceticism and faithfulness to prayer; clear-sightedness as to the relative claims of God and Cæsar; a firmness that the world calls obstinacy; a realization that it will mean martyrdom, and yet no drawing back; a struggle with self towards the end; "*fiat voluntas tua*," that prayer that every Catholic prays each day, prayed at last in the heroic spirit in which the King of Martyrs prayed it in the Garden.

During the last months of his life, Blessed Thomas More wrote many letters; and after they took his

books and writing materials away, he wrote on what odd scraps of paper he could get, with charred wood for pen. He mentions it in one of those characteristic passages which reveal his light-hearted humour as well as his deep affection:

"If I would with my writing (mine own good daughter) declare how much pleasure and comfort your daughterly loving letters were unto me, a peck of coals would not suffice to make me the pens."*

And Margaret alludes to the matter in a passage equally characteristic of herself:

"Mine own most entirely beloved father, I think myself never able to give you sufficient thanks for the inestimable comfort my poor heart received in the reading of your most loving and godly letter . . . which though it was written with a coal is worthy in mine opinion to be written in letters of gold." And so they are, not only for their shining heroism, but because they reveal to us the heart of a martyr. Men had not come, as yet, to the full self-revelation of autobiography and introspective diary (and such a man would, in all probability, never have indulged in this sort of thing). But here and there, in the course of some argument, of some effort to console his dear ones, he reveals his own intimate thoughts. Thus, what in the case of other martyrs we can only conjecture, in his case we know from personal testimony. Again, glorious principles that every martyr clung to, but which, alas! the hagiographer has taught us to know as lifeless platitudes, come to us, now, in the very accents of one who was to vindicate them in

* *Last Letters of Sir Thomas More* (the Catholic Library edition), from which subsequent quotations are taken.

his blood but a few days hence. We do not apologize, then, if the rest of this little study is mainly extracts from the *Last Letters*.

More's conversation with Roper in the boat, as for the last time he left his house at Chelsea, is well known; but until we read his letters we do not know all that the whispered phrase—"I thank the Lord the field is won"—meant. That last Mass and Communion; that quick departure, when he dared not trust himself to let them come as usual to the quay and kiss him good-bye; that sitting so sadly in the boat, and that sudden brave *fiat* whispered to his companion, were but one of the great moments in a long-drawn-out passion. Like many of the martyrs—even like Christ himself—he suffered bitterly in anticipation.

"I counted, Margaret," he writes—of a time long before he was actually challenged to take the oath—"full surely many a restless night, while my wife slept, and wente (thought) I had slept too, what peril were possible for to fall to me, so far forth I am sure that there can come none above. And in devising, daughter, thereupon, I had a full heavy heart. But yet I thank our Lord for all that, I never thought to change, though the very uttermost should hap me that my fear ran upon." And in another letter he tells how he often lay awake "forecasting all such perils and painful deaths," as might fall to him, and how it is now his great comfort to remember that though "of a nature so shrinking from pain," yet in all these "agonies" he never wavered (pp. 77 and 100).

If such precious little personal revelations are few

and far between, there is something that he repeats in almost every letter—whether those to Margaret, to other friends, or to "Mr. Secretary," the hypocrite Cromwell, who pretended such friendliness towards him while working for his death. It is that he refuses the oath for his own conscience' sake, not judging any other man's. Over and over again he repeats it—now attributing good faith to those who have sworn, in accordance with their own conscience, as he takes for granted; now explaining again that "for the instruction of my conscience in this matter I have not flightily looked, but by many years studied and advisedly considered" (p. 56). He might, indeed, be called the patron saint of those who tussle with their conscience; and more especially when it concerns their attitude towards England and the Church. For such people he has many precious words. He gives, for instance, a full account of all that passed when he first refused to swear to the Acts. He was sent to wait in the garden, but "tarried in the old burned chamber that looketh into the garden and would not go down because of the heat." Then he was called in again, "And it was declared unto me what a number had sworn ever since I went aside, gladly without any sticking. Wherein I laid no blame in no man, but for my own self answered as before."

"Then said my Lord of Westminster to me, that howsoever the matter seemed unto my own mind, I had cause to fear that my own mind was erroneous, when I see the great Council of the Realm determine of my mind the contrary, and that therefore I ought to change my conscience." His answer is noteworthy.

"To that I answered that if there were no more

but myself on my side, and the whole Parliament upon the other, I would be sore afraid to lean to my mind only, against so many. But on the other side, if it be so, that in some things for which I refuse the oath, I have as I think I have upon my part as great a council, and a greater too, I am not then bound to change my conscience, and conform it to the council of one realm, against the general council of Christendom" (pp. 38-41).

One cannot help feeling a certain surprise that he is at such pains to explain that he speaks only on his own account, and not of those priests and laymen, bishops and courtiers, "whose conscience or learning I would not condemn nor take upon me to judge." He is far too honest a man for this to be but a pretended attitude, and too brave a man for it to arise from fear of losing his head. Probably he knew that none in the realm were as far-sighted as he and understood what the oaths really involved; also that none knew the King as intimately as he, for several times he hints that what chiefly prevents him from swearing is a secret knowledge affecting the King's marriage, which he will only declare at the King's command.

More knew that to try and head a popular resistance would be worse than useless; that as a layman it was not his business, nor within his power, to try and rally the bishops, as, for instance, Becket would certainly have done. But his own conscience he dared not disregard.

It adds enormously to the merit of his faithful resistance and heroic death that he died thus, without the stimulus of a popular cause, without the sense that he was rallying others.

But if his death seemed meaningless and useless at the time, we are bound to believe that it did (or will) "bring forth much fruit." And may we not see in it the hand of God (working according to the divine economy that requires the blood of the martyrs) preparing for the extraordinary rally of the people so soon as Henry's real programme began to be known?

But to return to his letters. Closely connected with this oft-recurring matter of his conscience is another matter that troubled him considerably, judging by the number of times he mentions it in these last letters. It was that everyone considered him simply obstinate and perverse, holding to a foolish scruple of his own against all the learned men of the land. The general opinion hurt him enough, the accusations of pride hurt this most humble of men, especially as coming from great men who had been his friends. But what hurt him most was a letter from Margaret—written, it is supposed, rather to impress Cromwell than really hoping to persuade her father. The opening part of his letter in reply reveals the suffering this (and other such appeals) caused him. He tells Margaret that, had it not been for his trust in God, her letter had "not a little abashed me surely far above all other things, of which I hear divers times not a few terrible toward me. Surely they all touched me never so near, nor were so grievous unto me, as to see you, my well-beloved child, in such vehement piteous manner labour to persuade" me (p. 46). Unless we enter into this part of Blessed Thomas More's sufferings we shall never truly sympathize with him. And, after all, this is always the most acute of the sufferings

of those who follow the road of conscience in opposition to their friends. To grieve by his death those who loved him must have been by far the most bitter part of his agony.

"Before the world also, my refusing of this oath is accounted an heinous offence, and my religious fear toward God is called obstinacy toward my Prince. But my lords of the Council, before whom I refused it, might well perceive by the heaviness of mine heart, appearing with more ways than one unto them, that all sturdy stubbornness, whereof obstinacy groweth, was very far from my mind" (p. 92).

As to the actual discomfort of his imprisonment, he makes very light of that, and his words to Margaret are another little self-revelation:

"I believe, Meg, that they that have put me here ween that they have done me a high displeasure; but I assure thee on my faith, my own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife, and ye that be my children, I would not have failed long ere this, to have closed myself in as strait a room and straiter, too." It reminds us of his early desire to be a Carthusian; and, indeed, he had lived four years in the London Charterhouse, under its hard rule. All his life he kept up the practice of asceticism. As his grandson writes of him: "He had inured himself to straitness that he might the better enter in at the narrow gate of heaven, which is not got with ease."

This was, indeed, a characteristic of the martyrs; and they probably owe their constancy and their crowns largely to the fact that they had kept themselves in training. Probably many an apostate fell for lack of the spiritual muscle he had been too

indolent to acquire during the earlier part of his life. A terrible price to pay for what was, after all, very human sloth. Yes, but then Christ has given us full warning: "He who would come after me, let him deny himself"—that is the first condition; and then come the words "and take up his cross and follow me."

More's attitude towards death, and his utter forgiveness of his enemies, is typical of all the martyrs and of their King; but its expression is delightfully characteristic of More.

"As for long life (as I have often told thee, maid), I neither look for, nor long for, but am well contented to go, if God calls me hence to-morrow. And I thank our Lord, I know no person living, that I would had one philippe for my sake: of which mind I am more glad than of all the world beside" (p. 45). And, again: "I assure you, Margaret, on my faith, I never have prayed God to bring me hence nor deliver me from death, but referred all things whole unto his only pleasure, as to him that seeth better what is best for me than myself doth" (p. 96).

Does not this seem singularly perfect and complete? more deeply Christian and like Christ than any asking for martyrdom?

In the letter concerning the bitterest moment of his suffering, thus he writes: God "give me grace and you both in all our agony and trouble, devoutly to resort prostrate unto the remembrance of that bitter agony, which our Saviour suffered before his Passion at the mount" (p. 47).

As his death drew near the dread of it grew less, and yet he did not trust himself more as to his con-

stancy, but throwing himself utterly on God, reveals to us the secret of the martyrs' constancy.

"I thank our Lord (Meg) since I am come hither, I set by death every day less than other. . . . The thinking of any such [about death] albeit it hath grieved me ere this, yet at this day grieveth me nothing. And yet I know well, for all this, my own frailty, and that St Peter, who feared it much less than I, fell in such fear soon after, that at the word of a simple girl, he forsook and forsware our Saviour. And therefore am I not (Meg) so mad as to warrant myself to stand. But I shall pray, and I pray thee, mine own good daughter, to pray with me, that it may please God that hath given me this mind, to give me the grace to keep it. And thus have I, mine own good daughter, disclosed unto you, the very secret of my mind. . . ."

In another place, speaking of his death, he tells how his hope is that "his grace shall give me strength to take it patiently, and peradventure somewhat gladly, too. . . . Mistrust him, Meg, I will not, though I feel me faint. Yes, and though I should feel my fear even at point to overthrow me, too, yet shall I remember how St Peter, with a blast of wind, began to speak for his faint faith, and shall do as he did, call upon Christ and pray him to help. And then I trust he shall set his holy hand unto me, and in the stormy seas hold me up from drowning. . . .

"In good faith, Meg, I trust that his tender pity shall keep my poor soul safe and make me command his mercy. And therefore, mine own good daughter, never trouble thy mind for anything that ever shall hap me in this world. And I make me very sure that

whatsoever that be, seem it never so bad in sight, it shall indeed be the best."

And so he came at last to his trial, and heard with untroubled calm the sentence—more horrible than most people realize—that he should be dragged on a hurdle to Tyburn, and there hanged, drawn, and quartered. Later, however, this was changed to beheading.

It was on his return to the Tower that the encounter with Margaret took place; and afterwards he wrote her his last letter.*

It reads like the letter of a very old man, thinking, a little disjointedly, and with thoughts already far away, of his children and grandchildren, and of those who shall yet be born. He sends little gifts and messages, and in the middle speaks suddenly of that meeting on the wharf. One feels that all troubling and speculating, all fearing, almost all praying—in so many words—is at an end. He rests like a little child in God's arms.

So the great day dawns—his great feast day—and as he was used to do for great feasts, he puts on his best apparel—he who had never taken account of his clothes, but let his man choose and buy them for him. But the Lieutenant, as we have seen, persuades him to put it off, and wear an old one—as if the waste of a good gown need be troubled about while a saint is preparing himself so gladly to go to God.

With feeble steps, like an old man, he passes on his way—for though not yet sixty, these months in the Tower have changed him as if they had been many and long years. A good woman offers him a cup of

* p. 43.

wine, but he shakes his head gently: "Christ at his Passion drank no wine, but gall and vinegar."

It was with a little joke for the heartening of "Mr. Lieutenant" that he mounted the scaffold. And after speaking a few words to the people and saying his favourite psalm, the *Miserere* (which he used to say at home each evening with his children), he kissed the executioner—who had asked his forgiveness—saying:

"Thou wilt do me this day a greater benefit than ever any mortal man can be able to give me; pluck up thy spirit, man, and be not afraid to do thy office. . . ." And, covering his eyes himself, he knelt down, his last words the oft-repeated pleasantry about his beard. "So," writes his grandson, "with great alacrity and spiritual joy, he received the fatal blow."

* * * * *

And—as in the days when Becket's death stirred all Christendom, and sent the Pope himself into eight days of retirement—all Europe was moved. "Strangers and men of other nations," wrote Cardinal Pole, "that never had seen him in their lives, received so much grief at the hearing of his death, that, reading the story thereof, they could not refrain from weeping, bewailing an unknown person, only famous unto them for his worthy acts." In both Rome and Paris there was great public mourning for Cardinal Fisher and Sir Thomas More.

THE WARFARE

And meanwhile, perhaps the reader has been thinking of a band of young martyrs who did seem to have

a real enthusiasm for martyrdom, and who could easily have saved their skins if they had wished. We mean the seminary priests and Jesuits, of whom Cuthbert Mayne and Campion are two of the most shining examples. We know well their enthusiasm, their keen talk of "the warfare," as they called the English Mission, their haste to get trained and get back across the Channel, their almost boyish spirit of adventure, as, disguised as diamond merchants or what not, they stole into the country, and rode about, playing a veritable game of hide-and-seek with pursuivant and sheriff.

And yet their longing was not to die a horrible death; rather, it was to set out on the adventure of keeping the Faith alive in England. The chance of death added the spice of danger which always appeals to the Englishman; and the chance of the martyr's crown made the danger so worth while that they could look through the mist of blood and pain to the glory.

They set out, then, upon an adventure that must almost inevitably end in a bloody death; but it was in spite of this knowledge, and not on account of it, that they set out.

It is the joyful enterprise and young courage of them that makes them so appealing. One loves the cheek (if we may call it so) of Cuthbert Mayne, who, knowing there was no escape, scored a point over his tormentors. "All day they had kept him standing before them, while they flung questions at him, abused his holy religion, accused him of treason, and scarcely gave him the chance of making a fair, straight answer. At last they offered him his liberty if he would swear that the Queen was the head of the

Church in England. He asked for a Bible. . . . Then, making the sign of the cross, he kissed the book, and, holding it high, let the words ring clear through the crowded hall: 'The Queen never was, nor is, nor ever shall be, head of the Church in England!'"

We get a glimpse into the heart of these young soldiers of Christ in a story told of Edmund Campion —"one of the diamonds of England," as the great Cecil called him. He was at the Jesuit College in Prague when the call came, at last, for him to go to England. But before he received it a rumour had reached the college of the General's decision to let some of the English members of the Society join the mission. The old Fathers guessed that Campion—so beloved of all—would be among those chosen. They were deeply moved, for they knew it meant martyrdom. As Campion entered his little room, he found written in large letters over the door, "P. EDMUNDUS MARTYR," and on the wall at the head of his bed, a painted crown. When his Superior sent for him he felt somewhat confused because of what had been done. "The Fathers verily do seem to suspect something about me," he said. "I hope their suspicions may come true! God's will be done, not mine." Then the Superior told him he had been sent for to go at once to Rome, and so to England. He could not hide his emotion; and once in his own room, fell on his knees in tears, offering himself unreservedly "whether it were to rack, cross-quartering, or any other torment or death whatsoever."

There were women, too, who died at this time, and

who knew that by helping the priests they were incurring certain death sooner or later. It did not deter them, but rather the thought became a very part of their daily religion—the martyrdom of others took on a sort of sacramental value, so that we see the brave young mother, Margaret Clitheroe, stealing barefoot through the streets of York, by night, to kneel outside Mickelgate Bar, where the ground was red with martyrs' blood, and pray that if it were God's will she, too, might be found worthy of the crown. And when her time came she suffered the most horrible and most ignominious death that is recorded of any of the martyrs of this time.

And besides these and their comrades—Briant, Sherwin, and a host more—there were many faithful Benedictine monks who continued to minister to the people in secret, in spite of the suppression of the monasteries. There were Franciscans; there were laymen, like Dr. Storey. Besides the Beati, whose names are well known to us, there are 252 Venerabili, whose apostolic process was begun in 1923. Did any other country ever ask Rome to raise such an army to her altars? If Ireland is called "the Isle of Saints," England may well be called the Isle of Martyrs. And was it a coincidence or a sort of popular inspiration that made the people adopt St George, "the great martyr," as England's patron? unlike the other nations, who chose, rather, their own apostle—St Patrick, St Martin of Tours. And never did a people honour the apostle of their nation, or a sainted hero of their race, as the English people honoured the Roman St George. His feast—the great national holiday, and equal to Christmas,

liturgically—produced the most gorgeous pageants of the year. Churches, guilds, towns, owned their statue of St George, with the dragon and the other trappings that made his processions so famous. The dragon, of course, represented the enemy of the Church. Is it not strangely, almost diabolically significant that when Elizabeth forbade all representations of the saints in the great processions of the Guild of St George in Norwich, she said: "There shall be neyther George nor Margaret, but for the future the dragon to come in and show himself." And so he did. Snap, the famous green and gold Norwich dragon, went in procession with the civic dignitaries on St John's Eve till abolished by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835.

THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND

But if the statues of St George disappeared from England, the spirit of St George lived on in the English people. How many thousands of the common folk were martyrs in God's sight will never be known. Even the bare fact of their death is not realized by the majority of Catholics, and suppressed altogether in the school history books.

"There is no reason to suppose that the nation, as a body, was discontented with the old religion. Facts point to the opposite conclusion. . . . Long down into the reign of Elizabeth . . . the old Faith still numbered a majority of adherents in England."*

As we have seen, More and Fisher refused to take

* Dr. Brewer, in *The Reign of Henry VIII* (quoted by Cardinal Gasquet, who calls him "the best equipped and most disinterested historian of the period between 1509 and 1530").

the oaths connected with Henry's defiance of Rome, because they saw what the Acts meant and what they must lead to. Less far-sighted and clear-minded men did not feel it against their conscience to swear, for they thought that once the King's lust had been satisfied, things would right themselves, and Henry would be reconciled to the Pope, as more than one English King had been before. We may suppose popular opinion—very royalist at that time—accepted this view. But as soon as the *effects* of the Acts began to appear, as soon as the plain men who were not politicians and theologians got a glimpse of what they meant, as soon as Englishmen saw their Faith and their charters being tampered with, they resisted in very large numbers, so that more than once German and Italian troops were sent to put down the risings. And since the motive for this resistance was, in most cases, fidelity to the Faith, those thousands upon thousands of Englishmen—for the most part common folk officered by the country gentry and nobles—whose blood was poured out by Henry, by young Edward's Protector, and by Elizabeth, must surely be counted martyrs.

There is a striking poem of Chesterton's called *The Secret People,* of which the refrain is—

"We are the people of England; and we have not spoken yet."

Yes, they have been dumb a long time, now. But did they not speak, *then?* And if the sound of their quaint, uncouth country voices has long been silent, surely their blood cries to heaven—not for vengeance, but for a blessing on their land.

All over England wives and mothers mourned their

men—hanged, butchered, thrown into felons' graves. Martyrs, and yet so soon forgotten? Strange! No, not strange—for forgetfulness was then imposed as officially as Remembrance Day is now organized. We are taught to wear a poppy for England's dead; but if in those days men wore a red rose for St George and their fallen sons, it would have savoured of high treason, while to have a Mass said would have been to incur the death penalty. No wonder that after the immediate generation that had loved and lost, Englishmen forgot.

But we—the Catholic people of England once again—shall we forget? It has been truly said: "The blood of our martyrs must be prized more highly before it can take full effect."* Shall our forgetfulness hinder the consummation of their sacrifice? If the early Church reverenced supremely the Roman catacombs, shall we forget that our English fields, the streets of our towns, cover the place where lie relics of many a thousand men who died for demanding the Mass, the monks, the Seven Sacraments that sanctified each stage and aspect of their life, the Faith that, whilst Universal, was yet a very part of England?

And what of all the people of England who have not yet returned to the fold? They have no conscious remembrance of those brave ancestors of theirs. And yet they have—we claim it deliberately—an unconscious memory of what these died for. Catholic principles are rooted too deeply in English tradition, in the English temperament, ever to be quite forgotten. England has never been, and never will be, "an

* Fr. Lattey, S.J.

infidel country." Converts—people who "turn" to the Church—are seldom pagans; they are Christians who have gravitated back to the true centre, because they were men of goodwill, of Christian principles, with a desire for truth, ready to love the highest when they see it. Instinctively the people are welcoming Catholic practices now that their leaders offer them; and we should not mock this movement—it is very English; it is the way the English mind works.

And what of the vast masses who have no religion —are they simply poor, disintegrated units, with no Christian principle, no charity that co-ordinates them? As one mingles with such a crowd on Remembrance Day, one feels that at last something has welded them together—and it is the memory of English blood nobly shed. That great crowd, white-faced, with tears not so far off, has just one thought, one memory, one love. And surely the long, breathless silence is prayer—the silent cry to God of men who have forgotten how to pray. The red poppy is a sacramental, even if they know nothing of Christ's blood. In that two minutes and that single memory, Englishmen are welded together more closely than they have ever been since they lost the Faith. And they feel, then, as never before, that there is something they want, something to which their hearts would answer, if only it was there. It is England waiting for the Faith; England brought through suffering back to the feet of the Crucified. But it is dark as yet—they see him not.

The Last Post terminates the tense silence; and a distant band thunders out the grand old English paraphrase of the 89th Psalm. Here and there a

man's voice sings the hymn right through, oblivious of the crowd; and all heads are bare. It is the cry of England to her God whom she has never quite forgotten, even though she crucified again his Son:

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home;

Beneath the shadow of thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone:
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home."

The music swells in a triumphant crescendo, and ceases. The crowd begins to move.

"Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream. . . ."

Yes; in a few years' time there will be no one left who loved those men; Remembrance Day will be just a tradition. And already time has healed individual

griefs enough to let us remember collectively. And the blood of these boys of 1914 to 1918 seems mingled mystically with the blood of those other Englishmen of long ago. For if the martyrs merited the return of England to the Faith, it is these boys, by the shedding of their blood, by leaving their bodies in the fields of Flanders and never coming home, that have moved men's hearts to want God.

"Jesus, convert England. O England, be converted to the Lord thy God," cried an English martyr, with the rope already round his neck. Could our Lord be deaf to such a prayer? Could England fail for ever to respond? And, if we failed to join our prayers to the prayers of the martyrs, how could we claim truly to love the land for which they died—

"This blessed spot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,
This precious stone set in the silver sea."

CHAPTER VII

MISSION

"*THE Incarnation is the mission of God's Son in the world, and this mission is prolonged and diffused through the multiplicity of ecclesiastical ministries in all ages. 'As my Father hath sent me. . . .' Even as in the Old Testament the prophets, and the angels themselves, never intervened without being sent, so, in the New (Dispensation) there is no minister of the Redemption, I do not say merely without a calling or vocation which makes him suitable, but without a formal mission which sets him to work. And God is not less jealous of his exclusive right to send.*

"*Moreover, this mission . . . as well as the call itself, comes from God only through the Church. She is a vast and perpetual mission.*"

Père Clerissac goes on to describe something else which he calls "the spirit," and which, though not the mission itself, is *necessary* to it, and gives it all its power and fecundity. By this "spirit" he seems to mean a sort of personal enthusiasm—a fresh outburst of the Church's life and spirit in the servant of God.

"*Spirit is sometimes antecedent to mission—not that it usurps its place or with temerity presupposes it—rather it prepares the way and merits it. Hence you see in the history of nearly all religious orders,*

the founders and their first disciples live the idea of the institution before formulating it to themselves or submitting it to the Church. This inspired enthusiasm wins the Church's sanction, and she definitely works out the idea and officially gives the mission.

"Sometimes, on the other hand, everything seems to demand the Church's mission, but the mission does not come. This is, doubtless, explained sufficiently by the fine sense of opportunity which belongs to the Church. Newman forms in vain certain great projects for the consolidation of Catholicism in England; progress towards their realisation will be made only after his death. But this very case suggests another explanation. When the man who has the vision of a great religious undertaking is "un grand sensitif," *he fondles the work as if it were the fruit of his own art; artist-like, he puts into it subtle exigencies, an intenseness of purpose. Now the works of God and the Church are the fruits of reason and wisdom; and, what is more, no one must be able to attribute them to the whim of a human artist, nor even to his genius. God, then, gives the artist the honour of being the one to foresee and announce the great work; but he reserves it for his Church to accomplish it, often by lowlier instruments. This testing, this law of the purging out of the individual and merely human, is applied to ideas as much as to undertakings. If God did not will St Thomas Aquinas to finish his* Summa, *it was not that the humility of the great Doctor was in danger, it was rather that such things are only fully accomplished in Eternity"* (*Père Clerissac, O.P., in* Le Mystère de l'Eglise, *chap. vii*).

Mission is one of the most interesting features of sanctity, and, indeed, of the spiritual economy of God's dealings with the world, even apart from the canonized saints. The proper subject of the present study is *special mission—i.e.*, a task, and a corresponding gift of grace vouchsafed to certain of the saints. It is a subject peculiarly fascinating to the psychologist; for it deals with the direct intervention of God, acting on the world through the medium of a human mind.

Again, the mission that belongs to man has two categories, so to speak: one is sacramental, the other the direct action of God, acting independently of the sacramental law. The former depends on our Lord's "visible mission," the latter on his "invisible mission."

The subject is worthy of our closest attention, just because, to our Lord himself, his mission was the all-important fact about his ministry.

And yet, deeply interesting as the subject is, very few writers have dealt with it, either from the point of view of biography, history, or theology.

The sacramental mission of man—priesthood—is the continuation of our Lord's visible mission, and derives its power from our Lord's humanity. There are several very striking sayings of Christ concerned therewith; and, indeed, on the occasions on which he actually spoke *in the terms of mission* he was speaking of priesthood. But, intensely interesting as this subject is, we must leave it aside in the present chapter, and pass on to the second category.

As we have said, the sacramental mission depends on what theology calls Christ's "visible mission"

—the Incarnation; while special mission depends on the "invisible mission": that is, depends on it to supply the theological sanction and psychological explanation. Hence it is important to know just what is meant by the "invisible mission" of the Son of God. We cannot do better than give St Thomas's definition.

"The whole Trinity dwells in the mind by sanctifying grace, according to the words, 'We will come to him, and will make our abode with him' (John xiv, 23). But that a Divine Person be sent to anyone by invisible grace signifies both that this Person dwells in a new way within him and that he has his origin from another. Hence, since both to the Son and to the Holy Ghost it belongs to dwell in the soul by grace, and to be from another, it therefore belongs to both of them to be invisibly sent."

"The two missions are . . . distinguished in the effects of grace, which consist in the illumination of the intellect and the kindling of the affection."*

To the question "Whether the invisible mission is to all who participate in grace?" St Thomas replies in the affirmative, and he quotes St Augustine, "The Son is sent to each one when he is known and perceived by anyone, so far as he can be known and perceived according to the capacity of the soul, whether journeying towards God or united perfectly to him." But St Thomas has an important addition to this statement, which brings us to the real point of this article. "Such invisible mission, however, chiefly occurs as regards anyone's proficiency in the performance of a new act, or in the acquisition of a

* *Sumna* III, Q. LXIII, Art. 5.

new state of grace; as, for example, the proficiency in reference to the gift of miracles or of prophecy, or in the fervour of charity leading a man to expose himself to the danger of martyrdom, or to renounce his possessions, or to undertake any arduous work."*

In other words, Christ works and lives *more* in those who take an heroic or active part in the work of the Church. And, applying this principle to the saints, we would say that those who were given a particular mission may be said to have received Christ in a very special way, that living in them he might work on the world, carrying out some great design of the Father's.

The first thing to note about a mission is the *world's need.* No saint and his great work ever just *happened* like Dante or Michael Angelo or Shakespeare or Beethoven happened—mere adornments to a world that was not expecting them and would have gone on quite serenely without them. This connection between humanity's need and the saint's accomplishment is the most marked difference between the geniuses of the world and the geniuses of the Kingdom of Heaven. But it is important to note that by no means does the saint always recognize humanity's need—anyhow not at the beginning of his career. It is God who realizes humanity's need (if we may use so anthropomorphic an expression), and he realizes it before the beginning of the saint's career; before even the beginning of the saint!

The next thing to note is the providential arrangement of circumstances. Theology does not tell us whether or no God in creating the soul of the

* *Summa,* I, Q. XLIII, Art. 6.

saint creates it with the aptitudes required to meet humanity's particular need; but history shows us that Providence supplies the right sort of heredity and the right sort of environment, and, more important still, the right sort of experience.

The next point is "the spirit." Something duly wakes up the saint's enthusiasm, and he becomes, as it were, a little branch of the true vine more *alive* than all the others. And variously important as this increase of vital energy may be, the most important thing about it is that it produces the saint's fiat, which seems to be an essential stage in his progress towards the accomplishing of his mission. And since God employs second causes whenever he can, we always see the saint stirred to keen energy by something special, which seems to set him on a new tack, even though eventually he may pass on to far bigger things, and his own outlook be enormously widened.

Finally, comes the formal mission, and always through the Church. In a study like this it will be impossible to devote more than a page or two to most of the saints who illustrate our subject; we can but comment on this or that aspect of their mission. We will content ourselves, then, with dealing fairly fully with just one of them, who shall be considered first, so that, correlating up the various aspects of mission in one life history, he may help us to understand the rest.

ST GREGORY THE GREAT

Probably at no time in the history of Europe was a true leader so badly needed as in the sixth century. The old system of central government had gradually,

and for various reasons, ceased to operate. If its tradition still existed in somewhat corrupted forms, local government everywhere was falling more and more into the hands of barbarian chiefs. The old Roman populations were getting more and more mixed with peoples of barbarian extraction. Both morals and culture were at the lowest ebb they have ever reached in the history of Christendom. Ignorance and simony characterized the clergy of all ranks, for many of the bishops were simply unscrupulous laymen hurriedly ordained priests in order to fill the Sees for which they had paid a large price. The constant civil wars in every corner of Europe meant a sacking by one side or the other every few years. The Popes had simply given up all effort to tackle so overwhelming a problem. It was all they could do to face the impossible conditions in Rome itself, with the old traditions of the Empire to keep up, the Emperor right away in Constantinople, rival generals allowing not a year of peace, and immense barbarian armies bribed to come now by one general, and now by the other, laying Italy waste on their own account.

It was time for the Church to take up the reins of government, and co-ordinate Europe anew, but not now with temporal sway, and an army to enforce order. Rome was to dominate the world with spiritual power, holy bishops and zealous priests teaching the people, so that little by little all men might be brought under the gentle yoke of Christ. But mere authority, whether official or ecclesiastical, could never have done it. It required personality. The world awaited a man with a mission.

And Christendom awaited not a reformer, but a

man with a constructive spirit. Time was ripe for those developments to begin which should issue in the full system of Catholic worship and discipline which, so far, must be said to have been at its best in the Middle Ages, but which has yet to come to perfection—the kingdom ready for the second coming of the King. Did such a man appear? Yes.

Here is the testimony of no partisan historian, but a learned non-Catholic scholar. And to realize the full significance of his words, we must bear in mind that he is writing of a man who lived at a time when the Church could not well have been in a more deplorable condition, both from the spiritual point of view and that of outward circumstances.

Gregory "is certainly one of the most notable figures in ecclesiastical history. He has exercised in many respects a momentous influence on the doctrine, the organization, and the discipline of the Catholic Church. To him we must look for an explanation of the religious situation of the Middle Ages; indeed, if no account were taken of his work, the evolution of the form of medieval Christianity would be almost inexplicable. And further, in so far as the modern Catholic system is a legitimate development of medieval Catholicism, of this, too, Gregory may not unreasonably be termed the father. Almost all the leading principles of the later Catholicism are found, at any rate in germ, in Gregory the Great."*

But we must not think of Gregory the Great as a medieval Pope born five hundred years too early. He was a Roman—the last of the Romans, some

* F. H. Dudden.

have said. "He was more than pontifex or bridge-builder—he was a kind of living bridge himself, spanning the interval between the classical Rome that was past and gone, and that medieval Christendom yet to come, which he leaned forward to grasp across the ages."*

Probably, after the Apostles—the foundation-stone on which the Church was built—no man has had a more vital mission. It becomes, then, of intense interest to see his own attitude towards it. But first to describe God's perfect preparation of his instrument.

If ever a man was providentially suited to a particular mission, Gregory was suited to be the ruler of Christendom in the particular condition it was in just then. Leaving aside the all-important matter of temperament (and his was just the right type) his circumstances and previous experience are all that could be desired.

First, he was the son of one of the leading patricians of Rome: which meant the hereditary instincts of the ruling class, the best education obtainable, and considerable property and wealth to use as he chose. He had had a pious upbringing, and his legal training had developed one part of his mind, while his devotion to the Scriptures developed another. Then began the best education of all: experience. He was Prefect of Rome when he was thirty—and greatly beloved by the people. He had always wanted to be a priest, and at thirty-one he became a monk and founded seven monasteries on his own lands. After a time of peace, contemplation, and self-chosen abase-

* Stebbing, *The Story of the Catholic Church.*

ment, he found himself once more moving among the people, this time as one of the seven regionary deacons of Rome—and more beloved than ever. But only for a few years was he to enjoy the monastic life which he so longed for. In 579 he was sent on an embassy to Constantinople. Here he received experience and made friends that in years to come proved of the greatest importance in enabling him to deal with the persons and problems in the East. He returned to Rome and was made Abbot of the Monastery of St Andrew on the Coelian Hill—the home of his childhood—and once more tasted the joys of sacred study and union with God in very exalted prayer. At this time he was also acting as secretary to the Pope.

So much for the preparation. What of St Gregory's own thoughts?

Probably no man ever had less ambition to become a leader of men, a ruler in Christendom. His one desire, yes, his personal and conscientious choice before God, was to be a contemplative. His years in the East had been hard to bear, and to take up his life of monastic peace once more in the home and city of his fathers was the realization of his heart's longings. We may say that he was not ready, yet, for his mission: he had not given himself to God with that generosity which can accept the uttermost and go to the end with it. There was not yet that zeal to be up and doing which we have spoken of as the "spirit" that inevitably accompanies—and more often precedes—mission.

We must feel proud—we people in this "little angle of the world," as he called our country—that

it was over *us* that his enthusiasm to be an apostle woke up; that he gave his fiat to the call to leave his sweet contemplation because he wanted to teach *us*. It is fitting that the little story of the English boys in the market-place has become the best known incident connected with St Gregory; for perhaps it was the most momentous spiritual happening in his life. We will let one of his modern biographers continue the story.

"The fair features of the Saxon youths haunted him that night in his cell on the Coelian, and stirred his sympathy and zeal. A thousand winsome faces in that far-off land looked towards him from their dark, pagan rites; and in the morning he consulted his brethren, and went to the Pope to plead the cause of our forefathers. His earnestness and eloquence moved the Holy Father, who, however, represented the difficulty of finding men willing to undertake so hazardous a work as the conversion of that distant island; whereupon Gregory offered himself for the mission, and the Pope dismissed him for further consideration of the matter."* There was some delay while the Pope received petitions from the Romans not to have their holy friend and helper taken from them; but in the end Gregory won, and with the Pope's blessing and prayers for the success of the mission he set out secretly by night, accompanied by a few followers.

As a matter of fact, this little episode is one of the most unexpected of all the surprises the saints give us. There was nothing in Gregory to lead one to expect this burst of zeal for a very perilous missionary adventure. His sudden choice of a long journey into

* Abbot Snow, p. 42.

unknown territory, into a barbarian land abandoned by Rome, with peace and prayer and study gone, is so unexpected that we cannot but attribute it to a sudden outpouring of the Church's apostolic "spirit." His obedient heart responded, and this "spirit" took on the appearance of—became, in fact—a personal desire. With the whole of his being he said "Fiat!" knowing well what it would cost. And God accepted him—with an acceptance as large as his giving.

It was for unknown labours, sorrows and sufferings that he had given himself, and they came, quickly enough, and harder ones than he had vaguely imagined. The first was a crushing disappointment. The little band had advanced three days' journey and was resting in a field when the Pope's messenger rode up with orders for Gregory to abandon the project and return to Rome. He obeyed at once and went back to his old life as if nothing had happened. But the bitterness of the disappointment can only be gauged when, later on, he reveals how greatly his heart was set on the project.

A time of great misery and danger for Rome followed, with floods and plague; and Gregory figures not only as the chief organizer of relief, but as miraculous saviour of the city. He was evidently one of those men completely at the service of God and his fellows. We may say he was now *ready*.

And yet when his real call came, strangely enough he did not recognize it.

On the death of Pelagius, the people claimed him as Pope, and he was elected. He resisted strenuously, and appealed to the Emperor to intervene. This

effort, however, proved useless, and he was obliged to accept the honour from which his humility shrank, and the overwhelming responsibilities before which his courage quailed; while it seemed to him that his new life was a sort of spiritual ruin. He who had put prayer before everything, and was striving to detach himself from all created things, found himself, as he writes to a friend, "a slave to earthly cares, to the like of which I never remember myself subjected during my life as a layman."

For apart from the great dangers threatening the Church as a whole, conditions in Rome itself were the cause of hourly anxiety. The plague, which had carried off Pelagius, had nearly depopulated Rome. Earthquake, flood and famine followed. At any moment the Lombards might invade and sack the defenceless city. And there was literally no one with any authority or sense of leadership to help the people.

And so Gregory took over the situation as *a whole,* and became not only the spiritual father of the world, but practically military leader and chief civil authority of his own country.

Space does not permit any detailed description of how in a few years he got Christendom in hand, and then proceeded to build for the future. Suffice it to say that the method he adopted was simply to *teach* everybody concerned. He did this chiefly by a vast output of personal letters, of which "only a small portion"*—some eight hundred—remain. But these let us see him dealing with extraordinary directness, courage, charity and tact, not only with the bishops

* Ewald.

of every land, but with the kings, the military leaders, the barbarian chiefs; writing direct to the common soldiery, to slaves, to peasants, to noble ladies, to obstinate heretics, and, with important results, to the Eastern ecclesiastics very near schism at that time.

Early in his pontificate he wrote his famous Pastoral Rule, which quickly spread through Christendom, and became to the secular clergy of the next five centuries what St Benedict's Rule became for the monks, with the same transforming effect. The hierarchy of his own time was reformed, the clergy properly educated, and religion began to leaven society. The education of the young was attended to. A widespread movement for founding schools of chant in imitation of St Gregory's own school in Rome opened a new era of culture and learning. The monks, of course, were Gregory's chief tool in civilizing, as well as evangelizing, semi-barbarous Europe. Rebellious barbarians were first brought to terms by the Pope's tactful negotiations, and then converted so that they came to regard him as their spiritual father, and a new unity began to spread through Europe.

As to the Papacy itself, he gave minute personal attention to its temporal affairs, and so consolidated it that he and his successors had, in Italy, a power stronger than that of Emperor or Exarch, and Rome became indeed the centre of the Christian world.

But, important as was Gregory's influence in things temporal, "his great claim to remembrance lies in the fact that he is the real father of the medieval papacy."* For he insisted unwaveringly that the See of Peter was the supreme authority in the Catholic Church; and in

* Milman.

East and West men bowed to the claim, as never before.

And yet his greatest and innermost desire always remained the conversion of the English!

That it really was a special enthusiasm with him no one can doubt who reads his letters. And even in his spiritual books he finds means to express this preoccupation of his heart. As Newman puts it: "He cannot keep from talking of these savages, apropos of anything whatever, for they have been running in his head from the day he first saw them in the slave market."

Only four years after his accession he found time to go into the question of the mission to Britain, and sent St Augustine with forty monks. "One would have thought," says Newman, "that in the age of St Gregory a Pope had enough to do in living on from day to day, without troubling himself about the future; that, with the Lombard at his doors, he would not have had spirit to set about converting the English."*

How persistent Gregory's longing himself to carry out the mission had remained through the intervening years is pathetically evident in the letter he wrote to the monks, when, faint of heart, they sent back St Augustine to explain the difficulties and obtain a recall. "Carry out to the full the good work that by the Lord's help you have begun," he wrote. "May almighty God protect you by his grace and grant me to see the fruit of your labour in our eternal country. So that, although I may not labour along with you, I may be found along with you in the joy of your

* *Historical Sketches,* vol. iii, p. 134-6.

reward, for I wish, in sooth, so to labour. May God keep you safe, dearest sons."

There is a little touch in the letter to Augustine, sent on receiving news of his wonderful success, which reveals how conscious he was of the personal enthusiasm in this mission, and the danger of elation over success. He knows he himself would have had to guard against it if he had had his heart's desire and gone himself, and his warning to his friend and disciple has a ring of sincerity and personal anxiety—is, in a way, a self-revelation. It gives us a glimpse of the dispositions of a great saint with a great mission, and so is worth recording here.

"It remains, then, dearest brother, that in the midst of what you do externally by the power of God, you should thoroughly examine yourself within, and should thoroughly understand yourself, who you are, and how much grace is needed in this nation, for whose conversion you have received even the gift of miracles. If you remember that you have offended our Creator in word or deed, keep this always in your mind, that the remembrance of your fault may repress the mounting pride of your heart. And whatever power for working signs you shall receive or have received, set it down as given not to yourself, but to those for whose salvation such gifts are conferred upon you. . . ."

We see, then, in St Gregory a very perfect instance of a mission successfully carried out to the fullest degree. But, looking back through history, we are looking at the situation rather from *God's* point of view! As we have remarked, the saints with the greatest missions do not seem to have been fully

aware of what they were doing, or of how vast an enterprise God had put into their hands.

"Gregory's mind and memory were both exceptionally receptive, and it is to the effect produced upon him by these disasters [*i.e.*, the atrocities of civil war in his boyhood, and the natural catastrophes in later years] that we must attribute the tinge of sadness that pervades his writings, and especially his clear expectation of a speedy end to the world."*

"How different in this respect," says Newman, "is the spirit of the first Gregory . . . from that of Hildebrand, the Seventh! Gregory the First did not understand his own act when he converted the Anglo-Saxons; nor Ambrose when he put Theodosius to penance. The great Christian Fathers laid anew the foundations of the world, while they thought that its walls were tottering to the fall, and that they already saw the fires of judgement through the chinks."†

There are many things about St Gregory that make one think he did, indeed, expect the Second Coming and a speedy end of the world; and that, although his actions were of vital importance in the life of the Church for the next six or eight hundred years, he, himself, was working for the next sixty or eighty years, or even for the next six or eight.

Now, the fact that he thought the world had no future to speak of, and that he was living in the last age, forces upon us the conclusion that Gregory was not consciously leaning forward to grasp the future; was not purposely making history; not sowing the seeds of Christianity and learning in a new race for

* *Catholic Encyclopedia.*
† *The Benedictine Centuries.*

the sake of posterity; that he is not aiming at building the Church-to-come, but is rather, as he said at the beginning of his pontificate, striving to "bring into port the old and rotten ship, which, by the hidden dispensation of God, I have undertaken to govern."

We see, then, the saint making his own plans, working from day to day according to the law of second causes; and all the time carrying out God's great plans for his Church. It illustrates *how* the saint may be said to be literally God's tool, without his free will being violated.

As we have said, many things make us feel that Gregory did not know he was working for the future: and, indeed, his attempted rush for Britain has not the air of ecclesiastical statesmanship, but rather of a desperate effort to get something done while there is yet time. As he said in the market-place, he would have these people with "angelic faces" made "co-heirs with the angels;" these men of Deira snatched "*de ira*"; these subjects of Ælla taught to sing Alleluia—that, no doubt, they may be ready for the coming of the King of kings.

And yet one cannot help wondering whether it was not some swift, prophetic vision that made him pen that rhapsody of praise when he learnt of Augustine's success:

"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of goodwill; for the grain of wheat which fell into the earth is dead, so that he should not reign in heaven alone by whose death we live, by whose weakness we are strengthened, by whose suffering we are freed from suffering, through whose love we seek in Britain the brethren whom we knew not, by whose

favour we found those whom we sought without knowing them. Who is able to declare the joy that sprang up in all the hearts of the faithful in this place, since the English nation, by the grace of almighty God and the labours of your fraternity, hath been snatched from the darkness of error and enveloped in the light of faith. . . ."

And at the end of the letter he exclaims that if there is joy in heaven over one repentant sinner, what must be the joy when "so vast a nation" is brought to the faith?

Is he hymning his joy over the conversion of those scattered tribes in the little north-westerly island, or has he caught a glimpse of Mary's Dowry in the Middle Ages, of a worldwide English-speaking people in the twentieth century? We like to think that St Gregory's joy and hope over "the vast nation" that is the "seal of his apostleship in the Lord"* cannot be disappointed. Is not the joy of our Apostle a presage of what shall be in the last days?

ST BENEDICT

St Benedict, even more than St Gregory, is an instance of a vast mission of which the saint was never really conscious. St Benedict fled from the world to find God. He lived the life of a typical hermit for some years, and, we may suppose, found God. Then the mountain folk found Benedict; and at about the same time he found himself. He was not at all kind to himself: in fact, he threw himself into a bramble-bush. But probably on mature reflection he realized

* Bede.

that this was not the only way of subduing the flesh to the spirit, or, indeed, the best way.* And when simple men, desiring to serve God, came and placed themselves under his authority, he wrote for them a Rule which, though to a certain extent it made use of the mystical theology worked out in the desert, departed from many of the essential ideas of the older monasticism; for it made life in common one of the recognized means of sanctification; it gave work a place of honour; it mitigated austerity to such a degree that St Benedict could say in his prologue: "We are going to establish a School of Divine Service, in which we hope we shall establish nothing harsh, nothing burdensome." It made *prayer* the work of the monks, *par excellence*, but a prayer that was gentle, leisurely; that found its true expression in the plain-chant that in the next generation it developed so fully and carried all over Christendom. As to mental prayer, it is to be short. In fact, St Benedict quite simply states that his Rule is "a little Rule for beginners." Christendom had been suffering from a severe reaction after the impossibilities of the desert. St Benedict's

* "Of what may be called artificial self-inflicted penances —the hair-shirts, chainlets, spikes and pricks, and the scourgings that play so large a part in later medieval and modern devotional life—there is no trace whatsoever in St Benedict's Rule, or in his life as told by St Gregory. . . . The practice of self-flagellation, called 'taking the discipline,' did not come into vogue (at any rate in the West) until long after St Benedict's time, its introduction being associated with the name of St Peter Damian in the eleventh century. . . St Gregory tells us that when a neighbouring hermit chained himself to a rock as Simeon Stylites had done before ascending his pillar, St Benedict rebuked him, saying: 'If thou be God's servant, let the chain of Christ, not any iron chain, hold thee'" (*Benedictine Monachism*, p. 40).

Rule was neither a reaction nor a reform; it was a fresh start. It was one of those perfect things in which one cannot but see the action of Christ in the saint and the kindling power of the Holy Ghost.

Circumstances drove the community from Subiaco, and St Benedict built his first real monastery on Monte Cassino. There the monks started to live the regular Benedictine life. "A simple life it was, made up of a round of simple duties; and the monks were quite simple men: though, no doubt, some were of the same station in life as St Benedict himself, the great majority of them were recruited from the Italian peasantry, or from the semi-barbarous Gothic invaders (*Dialogues,* ii, 6). . . . The general conditions of life were probably no rougher or harder than would have been the lot of most of them had they remained in the world. The difference lay in the element of religion brought into every detail of their lives. And so they lived together their common life, serving God by the daily round of duties in choir, in farm and garden, in kitchen and bakehouse and workshop—chanting, praying, working, reading, meditating—their life-work and their life-interests being concentrated, as far as possible, within the precincts of the monastery or its immediate vicinity."*

But St Benedict's sons were destined to do big things in the world, and it is (humanly speaking) to them that Europe owes the Faith, and also the civilization that went along with the Faith. What was it that dispersed these quiet, prayerful, home-loving men through the length and breadth of a restless, warring continent? The Holy Ghost, of course. But what,

* *Benedictine Monachism,* p. 32.

from the point of view of immediate circumstance led to the migration of the monks? A tragedy—but a tragedy like the Cross: for out of it arose triumph. In 581 the barbarians sacked the monastery on Monte Cassino, and out of a scene of blood, ruthless pillage, and charred and smoking ruins the homeless monks trudged sorrowfully to Rome.

And Rome opened her arms to them. They were given a new home at the Lateran Basilica, under the very eyes of the Father of Christendom, who couldn't but perceive this new vein of holiness showing itself in the Church. And when Gregory the monk became Pope, St Benedict's sons got their marching orders. So they set out: to England first, and so throughout the world.

It was not a new departure, not a going back on St Benedict's idea; primitive Benedictinism was not thrown aside, its work done, and the monks launched forth on a new vocation. Different as may seem pioneer work in Western Europe from the daily round on the sunny Italian hills, it was all the true Benedictine life; and the further developments that took place in Britain and spread back eastwards—the great libraries, scriptoria, schools, choirs—were, in truth, *developments*. If St Benedict never actually visualized it all, we may say that Christ in St Benedict did; and that, though the beginnings of the Order are St Benedict's own, evolved within his own personality, and every Benedictine monk a lineal decendant of the great father from whom the first monks sprang, yet even as Christ could say: "I am not alone, for my Father worketh until now, and I work," so St Benedict, because Christ was in him,

could lay the true and lasting foundations of a work commensurate with the needs of the world until the end of time.

FISHERS OF MEN

"I will make you fishers of men," said Christ, while the disciples were still gaping at the great draught of fishes. And so missionary enthusiasm has always been a part of the Church's mentality.

It was a thirst for individual souls that sent St Peter Claver on his peculiarly unattractive mission. He seems to have had this thirst from early days, for the following is found in a little notebook, kept during his noviciate. It is one of four rules.

"Fourth: to seek nothing in this world but what Christ our Lord sought there. As he came on earth to save souls and died for them on the cross, we should try to gain them for him, for this, joyfully offering ourselves to any labour and to death itself. . . ."

It was the aged lay-brother, St Alphonsus Rodriguez, who revealed to Peter his real vocation: it was as if Providence had thrown them together for the purpose; though it was to study philosophy that the superiors had sent Peter, the promising young schoolmaster, to Majorca.

When at last we find Peter in the full flood of his great work, we see all the characteristics of the man with a mission: enthusiasm, an almost superhuman ability in dealing with the situation, overwhelming success, and an unspoiled humility. At his profession he had added a fifth vow—To devote himself for ever to the salvation of the negroes; and never was vow more faithfully observed. The number of negroes he baptized has been estimated at something over four

hundred thousand. It was as if he had been raised up by God to revoke the work of wicked men, to turn the hateful slave trade into a sort of press-gang for the kingdom of heaven!

In the hold of those great Spanish galleons that sailed so majestically into port at Cartagena, often eight or nine hundred men, women and children were packed. They arrived in a condition of terror, filth, vermin, corrupting sores and disease that it would be impossible to describe. Ten or twelve thousand were landed each year, to be transported to the West Indian Isles or to the mines of Peru. For nearly forty years of his life Peter Claver worked to sanctify their souls. These men, whom nothing would ever redeem from outward slavery, passed on, freedmen, citizens of the kingdom of heaven, the redeeming blood of Christ applied to their souls in baptism.

How he elicited sufficient understanding, faith and desire, to warrant the administration of baptism shows the genius of the man. But the description should start from the very arrival of the ship, to give any true idea of the extraordinary task given to this great fisher of men.

There was some competition among the authorities as to who should be the first to notify Claver of the arrival of a ship, for the reward was nine Masses. Even these hard-hearted people were struck with the effect upon the saint. His face would light up at the news, his tired eyes grow bright with a new youth.

Having learnt of what race the negroes were, he would obtain an interpreter, and then hurry down to the dock, laden with his "bait," as he called it—fruit, refreshing drinks, tobacco, brandy for the sick, sweets

and preserves. The terrified blacks awaiting fresh atrocities, marvelled to see this man, his eyes alight with love, coming on board with gifts to welcome them. The language of smiles, of tears, of embraces, needs no interpreter; but their own countryman would explain that it was indeed true—he loved them. Having given his gifts, he would ask for the babies born during the voyage and baptize them. Then attend to the dying, instructing and baptizing many who did not live long enough to land. He would then give himself up to tending the sick.

The next day he was on the quay for their landing, helping them ashore, and giving them the kiss of peace. He had brought carts for the sick; and would accompany the party to their wretched lodgings. The next morning saw him walking with his quick step, two bags on his shoulders, bound for the slaves' quarters. In one bag was all he required for his religious ministrations; in the other biscuits, fruit, delicacies for the sick.

Now came the first instruction—the Gospel preached to men whom anybody else would have thought utterly incapable of taking in any idea; let alone the spiritual fact of redemption and rebirth. The negroes were collected in a large courtyard. In the centre was placed an altar, upon it a large picture which, if crude, was calculated to present to their minds the central fact of the Gospel. And surely our Lord would do his part and enlighten their minds to understand. The picture represented Christ crucified. Streams of blood flowed from his wounds into a vase held by a priest, who was about to baptize a negro, who knelt waiting in deep devotion. The Church looked on—

Cardinals and bishops. To one side were a group of baptized negroes, bright and shining; to the other a sullen mob of men who had rejected it, and whose sinful souls were represented by hideous deformities.

With children and any primitive minds, seeing and doing are the only ways of really learning—much talking has little result. The next thing that happened, after the interested stare at the picture, was the novel experience of seeing a saint pray. For several minutes Claver would kneel in their midst, his soul imploring grace for these poor men, his face radiant, all eyes fixed on him in the tense silence. They could see he was speaking to one unseen, and in deepest reverence was beseeching. They had learnt to pray. Then came a lesson in making a reverent sign of the cross, with the words. Each was taught individually, and those who did it well rewarded with a sweet, the others receiving a gentle reproof. Then—no doubt with the help of the picture—came the making of acts of faith and hope; these leading on to acts of love and contrition, caught, so to speak, from their teacher, who let his burning charity and his genuine tears be seen by all. Then acts of hate (so to speak) against idolatry and sin; and, in antithesis, acts of longing for baptism: a little story about a snake changing his skin bringing home the reality—and here the language of signs came in, and Claver would catch the skin of his hand as if to tear it off. And those wanting baptism would do the same. Then, crucifix in hand, he would preach to them on the love of God, the tears running down his cheeks; and the negroes would break into sobs, and even cries and yells of grief over their sins. Finally, the following act of contrition:

"My Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of God, thou art my father, my mother, and all my good. I love thee with all my heart, and am very sorry for having offended thee. I love thee dearly, dearly." Tears drowned his voice, and everybody wept and sobbed. And so the first instruction ended. After two or three more, would come the great day of baptism, the ceremony being carried out with all possible solemnity. Week after week this happened for forty years! And between-whiles a tireless round of the settlements, preaching missions and keeping up the slaves to their duties. Claver's confessional was crowded hour after hour by negroes, who were only less importunate than the mosquitos: both, however, were welcome, the latter by way of mortification.

ST FRANCIS XAVIER

It was in the same spirit that Francis Xavier sailed eastward. "In March, 1540, Ignatius called him to his room and told him it was his lot to leave Rome the next day . . . in the first missionary expedition of the Society to the East Indies. It was one of those providential arrangements which seem the result of mere chance. . . ." So writes his biographer.* For Xavier, the apostle of the Indies, was merely sent as a substitute for another Father who had fallen ill.

Was it "tempting Providence" when a man with a mission—and passionately conscious of it—kept silent, practised "the third degree" with perfection, and so far subjugated his will, desires, judgement, to that of his superiors that only his very intimate com-

* H. J. Coleridge, S.J., *Life and Letters of St Francis Xavier* (from which the subsequent quotations are taken).

panions guessed anything of what was struggling in his mind—chiefly by overhearing him talking in his sleep? Oh, well, Providence looks on the intentions, and can smile lovingly on such strange abnegation of the very personality, and knock another unfortunate Father down, seriously inconveniencing the Father General! For, in order that the man with the mission from God might receive the formal mission of the Church, "a substitute [for the sick Father] had to be found at the last moment, and Ignatius gave to the Indian mission his very right hand, his secretary, the man for whose conversion he had laboured so industriously and so perseveringly at Paris."

"The appointment of Francis Xavier to the mission of the Indies appears, as we have said, to have been brought about by chance, and was certainly a variation from the original intention of Ignatius. It is, nevertheless, true that it was not unexpected by Francis himself. He had heard of the wonderful field opened to apostolic labourers in the Indies. . . . He had longed to offer himself for such labours, and those who knew him most intimately had heard him utter strange words concerning them. Laynez used to relate afterwards how, when he was sleeping in the same room with Francis, he had sometimes been awakened by hearing him cry out as if under the strain of a great burden, and how Francis had afterwards confessed that he had seemed to have been carrying on his shoulders an Indian, the weight of whom had seemed almost to crush him, and how he had found himself perfectly exhausted by his exertions. Simon Rodriguez, whom he was once nursing during an illness, had heard him cry out in his dreams,

'More! More!' and when Francis parted from him on his own voyage to the East, he told him as a last secret that he had then had represented to him a vast scene of toil."

Probably no one so perfectly reveals himself in his letters as this ardent missionary, with all his heart in the work, such a longing to share his enthusiasm with others, such a sympathy for his fellow-workers, through which one sees the unexpressed realization that, after all, they have not received the full joy and spirit of this mission, and need encouragement and teaching. One seems to see his very face in these letters, so full of humour, of quick and close understanding of people and situations; not conscious self-revelation, but a sort of necessary self-expression, in which his love and joy and wonder and thankfulness run over. And they reveal that constant characteristic of men with missions—namely, a complete grasp of the situation, an utterly sure knowledge of what to do next, what to advise others; and a capability, courage, and supply of grace sufficient to meet each contingency. Every time, these men are *masters of the situation:* but in the case of Xavier we realize it with a personal force because it shows in his letters, unspoiled by the admiring biographer with his comments and explanations and (often) wrong emphasis. We must restrain our desire to quote, except a few extracts to illustrate certain points.

Some of his most characteristic letters are to Francis Mancias, his companion, written while he is away on this mission or that. They are (as, indeed, most of his letters are) entirely informal, very direct, and treat of the things that are of immediate interest from day

to day; but being the letters of encouragement and instruction of the master to the disciples, they are often very self-revealing. One little remark shows that, as we have said, the mission of these men was directly the catching of souls for the kingdom of heaven—they counted their success numerically, not by territory or organization. "I am also very anxious," writes Xavier to Mancias, among other instructions, "that you should take the greatest care to baptize, yourself, every new-born infant as soon as it is born, or as soon as possible, that Paradise may be peopled by *their* souls, at least, most of which leave their little bodies before the age of reason, since we cannot get the grown-up folk to go there, either by punishment or promises of good."

This was a very hurried note, written during a short moment on shore, which perhaps accounts for the little bit of apparent hopelessness in the remark about the grown-up folk! But it forms a comment on his way of always and everywhere, among natives or Europeans, tackling first and chiefly the children. Indeed, in this letter he says: "Again and again I beg of you to give your first attention to the education of the children." And in his constant and urgent requests for long letters of detailed news, he asks after the children, how many come to the Church for their prayers, and whether they say them correctly.

"In the space of a month I made Christians of more than ten thousand." This is an item of news in a letter to Rome. He gives a detailed description of his method of instruction; and concludes: "When I have done all this in one place I pass to another, and so on successively to the rest. In this way I go all round

the country, bringing the natives into the fold of Jesus Christ, and the joy that I feel in this is far too great to be expressed in a letter, or even by word of mouth."

Another letter to Mancias gives a vivid little insight into the trials of the missionary life, and Xavier's own attitude. "I must again and again pray you, do not get angry with these poor folk, however much their faults and frailties move your bile. I know what an extreme annoyance it is to be perpetually interrupted when one is thoroughly absorbed in some work, by persons calling one away to attend to their own business, which is all they care for. Never mind, gulp down their importunities, keep a quiet mind all the time, and lend yourself tranquilly to the occupations which come of themselves to you from every side. Just do what you can, and what you can't do now, let it go or put it off. . . . You owe great thanks to our Lord God, and I suppose you give them, for placing you where you can't be idle if you would, where so many affairs surround and besiege you at every moment with something to be done, one upon another, but where—what is the sweetest of all condiments to any toil, however great—everything of this kind which besets you is clearly a call which belongs to the service of God——" and there spoke the man conscious of mission. At the end of this letter there is a sort of unconscious memory of that exhausting dream he used to have. "Bear these people, as it were, on your shoulders, treat them with unwearied patience and long-suffering tolerance, keep them from evil and advance them in good as much as you can, and be content."

Possibly Xavier took advantage of his absence to

rub in his ideas by means of these very emphatic letters. The last one he wrote to Francis Mancias—knowing he would not himself return to that part of the country—is interesting. After mentioning in detail all the points which he knows to be of utmost importance, he recapitulates them in a last paragraph:

"I am rather afraid you may be angry with me, as if I distrusted your memory, and so went on for ever thrusting on you the same advice over and over again. But you must forgive my anxiety, which may perhaps go beyond measure, and make me more careful than I need be in my overflowing desire to secure what I want, and take in good part that I again most urgently beg of you always to give the first place in your care to those two heads which I most earnestly commend to you, as matters which, in my judgement, are of the very highest moment. The first relates to your going perpetually round and round to visit the villages most assiduously, and without giving yourself any rest or stopping long anywhere; everywhere baptizing new-born infants, and instructing or providing for the instruction of the elder children who are capable of being taught. The second has reference to the sharp and careful vigilance to which I wish you to devote yourself in searching out the conduct of the native clerics of Malabar, and the example which they set the people; lest they not only incur eternal damnation themselves, but draw others also with them to hell. If you find anything wrong in them put it down at once, for God's sake, and chastise them quickly and severely."

Xavier was at this time earnestly seeking light on his plans, and in the earlier portion of this long letter

we get a little glimpse into the heart of a man "sent by God." "We hang upon his nod"—"glowing with alacrity for either of different and even contrary occupations or scenes of labour"—such expressions are characteristic; and the following explains the assurance of saints of this type, and what one might call their supernatural independence of spirit: "He has sometimes wonderful means of manifesting his will—secret touches which pierce the depths of the soul and flood it with light from heaven, so that the soul which is struck by these divine beams can feel no doubt at all where God desires it to go and what work to undertake."

And so Francis goes on his way—his one desire the salvation of souls; irresistible to the children, with his little bell, his radiant smile and his musical catechism. But equally irresistible to cursing seamen, with his transparent sincerity and friendliness. They tried not to swear, so as to please him; just as the Goa merchants tried to be honest, and dismissed their extra wives, and sent their slaves to catechism. And there must be a very great many souls in heaven who got helped in by Francis Xavier: sometimes at the end of the day his arm was too stiff to move, from administering baptism.

One feels that these two great Jesuits—Claver and Francis Xavier—were the servants of the king in the parable, who received the urgent command: "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

THE MUSTARD SEED

"To what is the kingdom of God like, and whereunto shall I resemble it?" said our Lord, looking into the future. "It is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden, and it grew, and became a great tree, and the birds of the air lodged in the branches thereof."

"The man" is the Son of Man; but he worked through human instruments and made his saints sowers as much as he made them fishers. It is in the wake of the great missionaries of Western Europe that we see this parable coming true.

ST PATRICK

St Patrick, returned from captivity, was serving God in St Martin's rock-bound monastery on the Loire, when the angel Victor appeared to him, with a letter from God, giving him his mission: thus he himself describes the experience: "And I read the commencement of the epistle containing 'the voice of the Irish.' And as I read aloud the beginning of the letter, I thought I heard in my mind the voice of those who were near the wood of Foclut, which is near the Western sea. And they cried out: 'We entreat thee, holy youth, to come and walk still amongst us.' And my heart was greatly touched so that I could not read any more."

He prepared himself during thirty years, and how he conquered Ireland for Christ is well known. But in these first missionaries of the great races that have made up Christendom we see an element that shows they were doing more than "catch men": they were

catching nations and insuring a Christian posterity: they meant the mustard seed to be a tree. And so St Patrick, in consultation with the Irish chieftains and wise men, drew up the Senchus Mor. He had the wisdom to keep that part of the ancient code which was wise and just, and had the authority of a long tradition; but where the taint of paganism was found, he substituted Christian morals. "Patrick's law," as the Brehon Code came to be known, was the charter of the Catholic faith, the strength and wisdom of Ireland for a thousand years. Alas, that the invader ever meddled therewith.

Even so Gregory—through Augustine—had a hand in the dooms of Ethelbert, the beginning of English laws; and the learning and industry of England, as much as her faith, were planted by the monks; while the beginning of national unity is attributed by Green to the Synods.

ST BONIFACE

One of the most interesting of these early missionaries, from our present point of view, is St Boniface.

He was born in Wessex, somewhere about 689, and seems to have felt the call to serve God as a result of the visit paid to his father's house by some Exeter monks returning from a missionary journey in the West. His father at first resisted the boy's desires, but in the end had to let him go—first to Exeter and then to the great School of Nutshalling. Here he became famous as a teacher, and was in great requisition, not only to teach the monks of the neighbourhood, but also the nuns! He used to be sent for to royal councils and episcopal synods; and both king

and archbishop had their eye on him: he was a marked man, and every sort of preferment awaited him. But he was a marked man in heaven, too! The mission came, and he understood. There were Englishmen preaching in wild Friesland—stories of the enterprise stirred his heart: this was God's call, and he was as sure of it as ever man was sure of anything. The most characteristic thing about Boniface—or Winfrid, as he was in those days—is his sureness about what is, and what is not, his mission.

His abbot, however, did not see it; nor did the king and the archbishop. It was only after much pleading that the young monk at length got leave to go, and arrived in Friesland, the land that was some day to be bathed in his martyr's blood. And now came a hard knock—a test of his sense of mission. Political and social difficulties meant a return of the missionaries to England before he had been out a year. We can see the monks chuckling over this proof that, after all, Providence had sent Winfrid back to them; and, their abbot chancing to die just then, they elected him abbot. But there it was—the election had been held, and he was Abbot of Nutshalling. We can imagine how pleased the nuns were! They liked the way he used to teach them to write hexameter verse, and probably all used the book he had written on the *Eight Parts of Speech*. But to Winfrid it was a serious affair. Going to Daniel, Bishop of Winchester, he explained the situation. Rather surprisingly, Daniel backed him up completely, and forced the monks to hold another election; and Winfrid found himself free, once more, to listen to the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

This time he meant to make quite sure of his mission; and obtaining letters from Bishop Daniel, he went to Rome. The Pope was seen to fix his eyes with a long, penetrating look on the young Englishman, while he asked for his letters of introduction: and in the end gladly gave him the formal mission to preach to the heathen in Germany.

Boniface, full of joy, returned to Friesland and enlisted himself under his aged countryman, Willibrord, Bishop of Utrecht. It was soon evident that this young monk was no ordinary man: extraordinary results followed his preaching. Willibrord, who was getting feeble, had a bright idea: he would consecrate Winfrid as his successor! But Winfrid was forearmed this time. He refused on the score that he had been sent by the Pope to do missionary work. But he also thought it expedient to retire out of reach; and departed in the train of Charles Martel.

Finding himself something of a free-lance, he thought it time to get fresh instructions from Rome, and sent one of his disciples to report. The Pope showed great interest, and sent for Winfrid to come himself. After giving him a very warm welcome, he consecrated him regional bishop, and sent him back to carry on with the good work.

Boniface—as he was henceforth known—had, now, very widespread authority, which, at the request of Carloman and Pepin, was extended over Gaul. His converts were numbered in thousands: he needed priests: most of all, he needed schools. Now, like other such men, he was a great letter writer, and had kept up a lively correspondence with England—the crowds of pilgrims always on their way to or from

Rome and the Holy Land forming a very efficient postal service. He now sent a circular letter to the bishops and abbots of England, which received a splendid response, and he was soon reinforced by a fine band of missionaries. It is pleasant to note that he kept up correspondence with Daniel of Winchester, who had saved his vocation, so to speak, and especially wrote to him when in need of advice.

Boniface had, it seems, also kept up correspondence with his old friends, the nuns; indeed it was to them he wrote when he needed anything, from an altar carpet to sympathy in his trials and annoyances. There was especially one — Leobgitha — who had written to introduce herself as a cousin of his, and ask him to write to her, and with whom he kept up a regular correspondence. When he came to need labourers so badly for his great harvest, his thoughts turned to Lioba and her sisters in Kent. They responded nobly, and thirty of them came out to him, Lioba becoming henceforth one of his chief co-operators in the great mission for which he lived and died. She lived for twenty-four years after St Boniface suffered martyrdom, and founded a large number of convent schools, over all of which she ruled as Abbess.

Episcopal advancement which was in keeping with his mission Boniface never refused, and no doubt with joy received the Pallium, sent by the hand of one of his disciples, and also the authority of Papal Legate in Germany and Gaul. As vicar of the Vicar of Christ he exercised a spiritual sway larger than any ever exercised save by the Popes themselves.

But his work represented more than a flourishing mission in a heathen land. Little by little he had been

consolidating everything. New Sees had been formed; there was a splendid system both of seminaries and parochial schools, as well as the network of convents and monasteries looking after the secondary education and the arts of civilization. Though Boniface consistently refused to meddle with political matters, by thus turning this vast stretch of barbarian land into a part of Christendom he had done the spade work which resulted in the great Carlovingian Empire, with its famous schools under the English Alcuin. And it was he who crowned Pepin, the founder of the dynasty.

In 748, then, Pope Zachary appointed Boniface Archbishop of Mainz and Primate of Germany. Seven years remained to him to consolidate his great work. And then, still faithful to the inner promptings, he passed into the heathen land in which his mission had begun, there to receive his crown, and to pour out his martyr's blood upon the soil of his choice.

"Let us fight for the Lord," he wrote, with great energy to Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury. "Let us not be dumb dogs, sleeping sentinels, hirelings that fly at the sight of the wolf; but watchful and diligent pastors, preaching to great and small, to the rich and poor, to every age and condition, being instant in season and out of season."

ST MARTIN

St Martin, the apostle of France, is, from the point of view of mission, the very antithesis of the great Englishman who was the apostle of Germany. If Boniface was conscious of his mission almost from boyhood, and had to fight for it against those who, in all good conscience, wished to see him serving God

otherwise, Martin, though full of spiritual zeal one way and another, had to be literally coerced into carrying out his apostleship!

The boy-mystic of pagan parents, praying to the God of the Christians in his little hermit's cell on the top of a hill in a distant Roman province, arrived in France much against his will as a forcibly conscripted soldier. He was now a catechumen, and although already something of a saint, apparently rather too content with the stage he had reached, for he was himself intensely conscious of the note of reproach in our Lord's voice, as he said to the angels: "Martin, still only a catechumen, gave me this cloak." He managed, with some difficulty, to get baptized and to leave the Roman army.

St Hilary, Bishop of Poictiers, saw great things in this strange young man. After much persuasion he got him to submit to ordination as exorcist (the first step, in those days, in the sacrament of order), thinking so to bind him to his diocese. But Martin, with his usual perversity, announced that he must go home and convert his people. Hilary let him go; but not until he had extracted from him a promise to return.

A series of extraordinary adventures then befell Martin, in the course of which he became a monk of the desert type. But, feeling in conscience bound to redeem his promise to his bishop, he finally turned up at Poictiers once again. Hilary, who had suffered persecution himself, and been turned out of his diocese for a while by the Arians, was delighted to see his old protégé, but was obliged to let him go, once more, because he was completely determined to be a monk and live in utter destitution in a cave.

Martin became extremely venerated, and when their bishop died, the people of Tours demanded the holy hermit as their new bishop. He utterly refused, and hid himself; and the people, who somehow knew that this was the man sent by God to be their apostle, had to resort to a ruse about a sick woman wanting him, to fetch him out of hiding. Having laid an ambush, they seized the charitable saint on his way to the imaginary sick call, and insisted on his consecration.

There was nothing for it, now, but to live up to his mission, and Martin, still adhering to abject poverty and retiring to his hermitage* whenever he had time, set to work converting the country, village by village, in almost exactly the same way as Xavier describes himself converting India. His success was wonderful, and, willy-nilly, he became what God had all along intended, the Apostle of France.

ST FRANCIS

St Francis of Assisi's latest biographer is true to type: Chesterton's *Life of St Francis* is perhaps the best study in personality that hagiography has yet produced—the most penetratingly psychological. He tells the story of St Francis's soul; everything else is either picturesque background or inevitable result. And much the same may be said of all his biographers. In a way it is not surprising, for St Francis himself is, perhaps, the most personally attractive of all the saints. In another way, though, it is remarkable, because St Francis was one of the most objective of

* Modelled on the desert monasteries; some eighty monks living in caves and cells.

saints—that is to say, he was looking all the time at his task, not at himself; gazing with those eager eyes of his into the very souls of the men he met in the way, and not—a Christian Narcissus—into the mirror of his own consciousness. Even his love of Christ was very objective, as compared with the other mystics. The Christ he loves is not a voice speaking in his own heart, in turns of phrase remarkably like his own, as is the case of St Catherine or St Margaret Mary. Rather he is Christ the king, of whom Francis is the herald; Christ the poor man, whom he wishes to imitate, and also to find in all the poor men of the world. But it resulted in so intense an assimilation to Christ that the likeness broke out in his hands and feet and side, as if it literally could not be hid. But even *now* it was not himself that was to him the centre of interest. When, in the over-burdening joy and wonder of his soul, he sought relief in expression, it was a psalm-like hymn of praise and wonder to Christ, "the great and wonderful Lord God almighty: loving and merciful Saviour," that he wrote; and what is written on the back of this precious parchment—still at Assisi—tells of the other love in his holy heart, which was yet the same love. For the words that Leo in his temptation to despair so longed that Francis should write for him are written there, though he had not dared formulate his request—

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee.
The Lord show his face to thee and have mercy upon thee.
The Lord turn his countenance to thee and give thee peace."

And beneath: "Brother Leo, may our Lord bless thee"; and a rough drawing of a man's head, with

a cross upon it passing also through the name Leo. This was Francis, in the moment of his own spiritual exaltation.

And yet all personal loves were merged in the love of his mission—the thing our Lord had sent him to do in this wicked, quarrelling world, which so misunderstands the loving God, his beautiful gift of nature, and the innocent, perfect thing the human heart can be if it will only repent and cleave to Christ.

There is a little incident in these last mysterious days after his stigmatization, that brings home to us what his mission meant to Francis. It happened at San Damiano, where Francis, halting for one day to visit Clare on his last missionary journey, was forced to stay six weeks, through a sudden increase in his sickness.

Clare had a little hut built for him in the garden, and thither his companions—four of the men who first joined him, and whom most he loved—carried him. That night seems to have been one of very great suffering—his bodily pain was acute, his sight had failed at last, a strange despondency had overpowered his brave soul, and to add the last touch of discomfort, the hut was over-run with mice. It was almost more than he could bear, and like a tired child he cried to our Lord to help him. Swift came the consolation, and a great promise of joy to come, and it set all his heart singing. So, with the dawn of day he rose, and called the brothers, and told them of his great consolation, adding: "Wherefore to the praise of the Lord and for our own comfort and for the edification of our neighbour, I will make a new hymn

concerning those creatures of the Lord which minister to our daily need and without whom we could not live." And after a few moments he broke into his great "Canticle of Brother Sun." And having recited it, he told them to write it down; and then, making a tune for it, he taught the brothers to sing it.

In the days which followed, though weak from sickness and the pain and bleeding of his stigmata, and with the light of Brother Sun for ever hidden from his eyes, St Francis seems to have returned to the old, glad, hopeful spirit of the days when he first set out on his mission. Perhaps it was partly the intimate companionship of Clare, who understood him as no one else did, and who was full of brave confidence in his ideals, as we see from the way he entrusted them to her at his death, and she fought for them and won when others were ready to compromise; and from the fact that when he left San Damiano, he sent her back the little songs that he often composed in the new joy that was always with him now. Anyway, his old spirit was back again. And now for the incident we mentioned, which is one of those last revelations of how much Francis believed in, lived in, loved his mission. And it is characteristic, too, of his seemingly impossible methods, used, nevertheless, by God, so that surprising success attended them.

During those days of weakness but also of joy, with the Canticle of Brother Sun singing itself in his heart, he heard tell of one of those terrible ructions between the civil and the Church authorities in Assisi: the Bishop excommunicating the Podestà, and the Podestà commanding a boycott of the bishop. Francis, hearing of it, was moved with great compassion on them.

And he promptly composed a new verse to the Canticle of Brother Sun :

> " Praise be to thee, my Lord, for all those who pardon
> grant for love of thee,
> And weakness bear and buffetings :
> Blessed are they who in peace abide,
> For by Thee, Most High, they shall be crowned."

Then he sent a brother to ask the Podestà to go to the Bishop's palace with the magnates of the city. For love of Francis they did as they were asked. Meanwhile Francis had sent two other brothers to the palace, saying : " Go and sing the Canticle of Brother Sun before the Bishop and the Podestà and the others who are with them, and I trust in the Lord that he will immediately humble their hearts, and they will return to their first love and friendship."

Optimist !—you may say. But so it indeed came to pass. For when the Canticle had been sung, the chief magistrate—who had listened with tears—threw himself at the feet of the bishop, saying : " Behold, I am ready to make satisfaction for everything as it shall please you, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his servant, Blessed Francis." And the bishop, taking him with his hands, raised him, saying : " My office bids me be humble, yet because I am naturally prompt to wrath, it behoves that thou shouldst pardon me." And so with much benignity and love they embraced and kissed each other.

Francis was delighted with the success of his little plan. " And he wished to send for Brother Pacifico, who in the world used to be called the King of Verses, and was a truly courteous teacher of singers; and he wished some friars to be given to him that they should go together with him through the world preaching and

singing praises of the Lord. He who knew how to preach best among them should first preach to the people, and after the preaching they should all sing together the praises of the Lord like minstrels of the Lord. And when the praises were finished, he wished the preacher to say to the people: 'We are the minstrels of the Lord, and for these things we wish to be paid by you—that is, that you should remain in true penitence.' And he said: 'For what are the servants of the Lord but his minstrels, who should raise the hearts of men and move them to spiritual joy.' And this he used to say specially of the Friars Minor, who were given to the people of God for their welfare."*

We are not going to try here and now to explain St Francis's mission. It seems to us that no one has yet explained it satisfactorily. Perhaps it is too big, too diffused, too divine, to be wholly explained. Perhaps that is why St Francis's biographers have not done more than try and explain St Francis. Perhaps the most important comment on St Francis's mission is the expression our Lord used in giving it to him. Francis, in the little Church of San Damiano, was not dreaming, and there is no reason to doubt that the voice was less our Lord's own human voice than when he spoke to St Paul on the Damascus road. "Francis," he said, "go and repair my Church which thou seest near to falling." The words are all the more significant because Francis did not understand them, and honestly thought they referred to the material condition of the little church in which he knelt. There was no kind of preconceived idea, of

* *The Mirror of Perfection,* Chapter C.

possible auto-suggestion, concerned. Further significance is given to the words by the dream of Pope Innocent III, who seemed to see the Church of St John Lateran—the mother-church of Christendom—about to fall, and only propped up by the back of a little poor man. It was this dream which obtained for Francis his formal mission.

Now the point is that our Lord, however figurative his utterances, is not exaggerative. And prophetic dreams, however quaint, do not carry an essentially untrue idea in their signification. Hence we may suppose that the Catholic Church was in a very perilous condition when St Francis arrived on the scene. That promise of our Lord, "Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," may, perhaps, be rather inclined to make Catholics feel that there is no need to bother, and that the Church has never been in real danger. Of *course* it was (and is) utterly impossible that the Catholic Church should ever collapse. Because of our Lord's various promises we can rest assured that always he will use his power to preserve, build up, reform, rejuvenate his Church. But, as we are labouring to point out, he invariably does it by raising up some man and giving him a mission. Often, it is to establish or rebuild the Church in some particular country. Or to introduce some particular good into the Universal Church, which tends to renew her youth like the eagle's. It is only applying the same principle to say that he actually prevents the gates of hell prevailing by these his human instruments. If a study of mission throws light on St Francis, St Francis reflects a very bright radiance on mission, and allows

us to think of it in terms the next most exalted after those in which we think of the actual founding of the Church by Christ our Lord.

ST DOMINIC

The enormous amount of human vitality and rich diversity that existed in the Middle Ages comes home to us vividly when we realize that both St Dominic and St Francis were representatives of their age; an age which produced other types as well—St Louis and Richard Coeur de Lion, the peasant heroine-mystic, Joan, and the royal ascetic, Elizabeth. They were all typical of the Middle Ages. There is no parallel in other days—even in our own age of individualism.

St Dominic and St Francis were very different. The *sort* of difference between them is well illustrated by the styles adopted by their latest biographers.

While in Chesterton's book one can find much about St Francis's mission by studying St Francis himself, in Father Bede Jarrett's *Life of St Dominic* it is the other way about. He tells the story of a mission, of an ideal, of a great new Order, of an embodied idea.

In telling the story he lets us see the man who lived for this idea, who made this great Order: and it is, in fact, the best way to get a view of St Dominic. It is a pity, indeed, that the writer had not faith enough in this style to let it carry him through to the end, but thought it needful to insert the chapter called "His Portrait," which reads more like the conventional hagiography. This catena of appreciative descriptions, words of praise, depositions, do not give us as vivid an idea of the man as those brief statements in

other chapters where Dominic's personality strides into the story of his Order.

We do not intend going into the question of what his mission was: for one thing, the story of the Dominican Order is probably more familiar to the reader than the lives of most of the great men whom we have felt justified in describing at some length. Besides, it is too big an idea to generalize about in a page or two. We will content ourselves with mentioning a few points brought out by Fr. Bede Jarrett, which indicate the most characteristic thing about St Dominic and his mission.

Perhaps of all the men sent by God he was the most conscious of what he meant to do; visualized most clearly the need, and the thing that would meet it; made his plans most deliberately, and of set purpose roped in everybody whom he perceived could help him carry them out. We feel that he was so far more clear-sighted than other men that he knew it was no use talking and explaining. He kept his own counsel, bided his time, and acted when he saw the moment had come. Sometimes it surprised and disconcerted the good people who thought they knew what he was after. Some "walked no more with him," others said: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," and did as they were told in somewhat bewildered astonishment.

All this we are shown in such incidents as Bishop Foulques demanding back the diocesan dues when he found how big were St Dominic's aims, for Foulques "was still thinking in terms of his diocese, but Dominic was thinking in terms of the Church." St Dominic gave back the dues, and his action was significant.

No less characteristic is the following scene. Two years later, returning from Rome, he finds sixteen brethren in a well-established convent. But the Albigensians have increased and seem to be winning. The friars renew their vows; and then, without discussion, Dominic hurls a bomb, so to speak, into their midst, and scatters them through the world: "We must sow the seed, not hoard it. You shall no longer live together in this house." It came to them as a real shock: they had not suspected what was in their leader's mind. It seemed a mad proceeding; but back they all went to their own countries, and Dominic, after staying behind to instruct four new brethren, went to Rome.

We have already mentioned the fact that sometimes, when the rest of the Church was hesitating or even opposing, if the saint could get to the Pope himself he was understood and supported. Fr. Bede Jarrett has stressed this point in the *Life of St Dominic:*

"Perhaps the most amazing part of the whole affair was that the confirmation was actually given, and given so generously. The opening words of the Bull will be remembered, and they bore to the astonished minds of that generation a very definite meaning, a break with all the past, a setting of the work of the preaching friars above experience, above past legislation and the opposition of the more conservative canonists: 'Considering that the religious of your Order will be the champions of the faith and the true lights of the world, we confirm your Order.' Boldly the Sovereign Pontiff puts as the very reason of his approval the novelty and dangerous vocation undertaken. The work of Rome has always been best done

when she has trusted her children. St Dominic was put on his honour not to fail in loyalty to the Holy See. He lived up to his knightly oath of fealty."*

MISSION AND WOMEN

It is a curious thing that mission, in the full sense of the word, is very rarely found in the lives of the women saints. And in the few cases we can think of there is always some very particular characteristic which differentiates it essentially from the missions we have already described. What is the underlying principle which we can trace out in the facts supplied by history?—the psychological clue that explains the facts? Once more we must turn to St Thomas.

In the first article of Quæstio XXXIX, "*Of the Impediments to this Sacrament*" (Order), he answers the question: "Whether the female sex is an impediment to receiving Orders."

The Catholic reader smiles at the very question. But St Thomas doesn't: he sets himself to answer it perfectly seriously, and in the Objections, brings forward all that may be said in favour of women being admitted to the priesthood. We will give the Objections in full.

Objection 1. "It would seem that the female sex is no impediment to receiving Orders. For the office of prophet is greater than the office of priest, since a prophet stands midway between God and priests, just as the priest does between God and the people. Now the office of prophet was sometimes granted to women, as may be gathered from 4 Kings xxii, 14. Therefore the office of priest also may be competent to them.

* Pp. 82-83.

Objection 2. Further, just as Order pertains to a kind of pre-eminence, so does a position of authority, and also martyrdom and the religious state. Now authority is entrusted to women in the New Testament, as in the case of abbesses, and in the Old Testament, as in the case of Debbora, who judged Israel (Judges iv). Moreover, martyrdom and the religious life are also befitting to them. Therefore the Orders of the Church are also competent to them.

Objection 3. Further, the power of Orders is founded in the soul. But sex is not in the soul. Therefore difference in sex makes no difference to the reception of Orders."

The full meaning of St Thomas's answer will only be understood by those who are familiar with his teaching on Sacraments in general, and on how *perfect signification* is necessary before the Sacrament can come true, so to speak: because that is the sacramental law God has laid down, and the whole point of sacraments is that they "produce what they signify."

". . . Even though a woman were made the object of all that is done in conferring Orders, she would not receive Orders; for since a sacrament is a sign, not only the thing,* but the signification of the thing is required in all sacramental actions: thus it was stated that in Extreme Unction it is necessary to have a sick man, in order to signify the need of healing. Accordingly, it is not possible in the female sex to signify eminence of degree, for a woman is in the state of subjection." (In parenthesis we may say that by "subjection" St Thomas only means that, of the two beings created by God, man and woman, man is

* *I.e.*, the spiritual effect.

the head; which does not imply inferiority in woman, but merely the relationship which is her natural mode of existence: not "subjection" in any arbitrary sense. How far St Thomas is from implying anything derogatory to woman will be seen from his answers to the objections.)

Ad 1. "Prophecy is not a sacrament but a gift of God. Wherefore there is not the signification, but only the thing, which is necessary. And since in matters pertaining to the soul, woman does not differ from man as to the thing (for sometimes a woman is found to be better than many men as regards the soul), it follows that she can receive the gift of prophecy and the like, but not the Sacrament of Orders.

"And thereby appears the reply to the second and third objections. However, as to Abbesses, it is said that they have not authority, but delegated, as it were. . . . But Debbora exercised authority in temporal, not in priestly matters, even as now woman may have temporal power."

Now, although mission is not a sacrament, it seems to us that St Thomas's answer provides the clue we are seeking; and that his replies to the objections supply the answers to the questions we shall presently ask.

It seems to us as if, in that great fact of spiritual creativeness and leadership within the Church which is called *mission,* God has willed to respect his own work in making the woman a different being from the man, with a different rôle, different potentialities, her own *character,* so to speak; as if he will not override what he has done in nature when he acts in the kingdom of heaven. For, after all, the Church

Militant is part-human; is not yet an all-spiritual thing; has to take nature into account. If the sacramental law of signification cannot ignore the very essentials of femininity, no more can the Creator, while he acts in the material world.

Hence, the great mission of sacramental priesthood, with which we opened this study, is not given to woman; but it has its parallel—matrimony:* also a sacrament; also not for all, but for those called to it; and also essential to the Church's life. And from the time of woman's creation the notion of this being her "mission" exists. The word "sent" is not used, for in those days God walked in Eden. It is said, instead, that after the creation of woman: "The Lord God . . . *brought* her to Adam." But as we are not dealing with sacramental mission, we will leave it at that, and pass on to special mission.

In the history of the Church many women have been given special rôles to play, big tasks to perform, with a proportionate outpouring of grace and invisible coming of Christ. And in some cases the designation *mission* must be given to their life-work. But if the sacramental law had perforce to take account of the essentials of womanhood, it seems, as we have said, that their non-sacramental missions in the kingdom of heaven are not given in utter disregard of the psychology of womanhood. Far the greater number of missions were carried out in obedience to and in co-operation with a man with a mission. True co-operation: for the man is encouraged spiritually by

* It is interesting to note that many of the eminent women saints were married, though this is very seldom found among men saints.

the sympathy (and sometimes insight and faith) of the woman, and assisted materially in that part of his mission which, as a man, he could never have carried out alone.

These missions, in which a sort of glad and fruitful obedience are essential characteristics, are found only in women: men with missions have always been essentially independent. And there is nothing arbitrary, limiting, implied—the whole essence of the woman's mission was to co-operate with this particular man of God: in this she found her blessedness, her joy, her means of serving God heroically: far from slavedom of spirit, it set her free from the littleness of self and the world, and guaranteed her the liberty to expand in that for which God had made her soul. This is what St Clare meant when she called herself the Little Plant of St Francis, and strove so desperately after his death to be allowed the complete poverty he had decreed.

To be a religious founder or superior is the mission most often given to women: and, by the way, it is worth noting that from St Bridget, with her great schools, to Madame de Marillac, with St Vincent's orphanages—full of babies, they almost all had the care of children, so justifying that invocation of the Psalmist—"*Laudate pueri Dominum: laudate nomen Domini* . . . who maketh the barren woman to dwell in her house, the joyful mother of children."

ST JOAN

But from these happy spiritual mothers, one turns with some puzzlement to little, lonely, heroic figures like Joan and Bernadette. If ever anyone had a

mission, St Joan had. It is the thing she constantly reiterates from the moment she appears on the scene until the cruel flames are licking up round her innocent young body.

"I did not take this dress or do anything, but by the command of our Lord and of the angels." "All I have done is by our Lord's command." "God will clear my path to the Dauphin, for to this end was I born." "I shall only last a year. Make the most of the time, for I have much to do."

In the cart as it lumbered along to the scaffold, she prayed little broken prayers to the blessed Trinity and to her saints, and asked those present to forgive her, and the priests to say masses for her soul; but between these infinitely pathetic utterances of a frightened child going alone to a horrible death, spoke suddenly the soul who knew that all she had done was indeed her own doing—hers and God's. "Let no one accuse my king," she said, in a last, sad burst of loyalty for the miserable mannikin who had seemed to her transfigured in the light of her mission: "He had nothing to do with what I did. If I have done ill he is innocent."

And then, out of the smoke came the glad, eager cry: "No, no, my voices have not deceived me! they came truly from God!" And a last testimony to her mission: "It is in obedience to this sovereign Lord that I have done all my actions." And surely he came to fetch her, for they heard her cry: "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!"

But Joan's mission was a temporal one—like Debbora's. She came not to save the Church, to teach the Church, but to save France. It was God's

mercy on a suffering country, his intervention on the side of justice that sent Joan to the rescue.

Why, we may ask, did he chose an innocent maid for this difficult and warlike task? It is not for anyone to explain the ways of the All-wise. But if we may hazard a guess, we would say that it was because Joan was the being most likely to behave like an angel—which was what the occasion demanded. A soldierly young man, being a man, would almost certainly have been carried away a little bit by the lust of war. But to a girl this was no temptation. We see Joan jumping off her horse to take a dying Englishman's head on her breast, and there are tears in her eyes to see his wounds. A man who was not a soldier and who hated war would still have run great risks of having his head turned by sheer power—but ambition is not an ingredient in a woman's make-up. An older man or woman would have imparted their advice with an air of detached wisdom, and would not have thrown themselves with genuine enthusiasm into the game of storming battlements, banner in hand. They would not have been the brave, simple, energetic *comrades* of the young commanders and soldiers: but this—and her shining maidenhood—was what endeared Joan to them.* A monk would have lashed them with his words for their lax behaviour, and put their backs up. But when an angel of a girl told them to be good because she hated to have comrades who behaved otherwise, they tried not to swear, and checked their lusts to please her. It was

* And to them one of the proofs of her mission was her angelic unconsciousness of sex—that she did not fall in love with anyone.

because Joan seemed like an angel, and so utterly miraculous, that the Dauphin gave her the command of the army, and that the worldly advisers and even the Archbishop of Rheims did not gainsay him.

The whole thing was very hard on Joan, and held far less consolation than most missions. But no doubt Christ our Lord has given her the heavenly V.C., and ample reward in glory.

She holds other puzzles for us; but there are two things which, if we grasp them clearly, are a quite satisfying explanation, and, incidentally, they are interesting from the point of view of mission. One is that Joan—who was not familiar with theological phrases—did not know what they meant at the trial when they accused her of setting up her own judgement against that of the Church Militant. She *knew* her mission came from our Lord, and to her, Christ and his Church were one. She did not for a moment see that these old men—some insincere, others fussing over what seemed irrelevant details—had (as they had, of course) a right to consider themselves better judges than she herself, as to whether her revelations were divine or whether she was deluded. We must not think of her as if she had the mentality of, say, a Jesuit novice of a couple of hundred years later. The point of interest as regards mission is that she was so sure of it as to be willing to die for it: there was no intellectual pride in her refusal to recant—to do this would have been to her like denying Christ and his most precious graces to her soul. We must remember Joan when thinking of other saints with missions, for she reveals their state of mind; and, in her, we see it pushed to its logical extreme.

The other point to bear in mind is that it really was very difficult for those representatives of the Church to know what to do with a person who refused to submit her judgement to the Church about very puzzling spiritual manifestations; especially in an age when heretics of every sort were coming forward, claiming missions, and often teaching not only anti-Catholic, but anti-social ideas, in the name of God. The only way the matter could well have been resolved would have been for God to give some outward indication of Joan's mission; or for some Church authority with power and position to have had his mind interiorly enlightened by God, and to have taken upon himself to vouch for Joan's divine leading, and, having decided in her favour, taken her under his care and spiritual direction. But God manifested neither outward sign nor inner enlightenment, and, in accordance with the customs of the day, Joan was dealt with as an obstinate heretic.

We must bear in mind this, also, in studying mission. These saints were almost always innovators; sometimes revolutionaries; often having very peculiar effects upon society. If St Francis was not told to keep quiet and join the Canons Regular or some steady-going Order, it was because first Cardinal Ugolino, and then Innocent III had their minds enlightened by God. If Boniface escaped the fate of being abbot of Nutshalling to the end of his days, it was because God let Daniel of Winchester know that this was a man wanted as a missionary. And so on with all the rest.

ST CATHERINE

What of St Catherine of Siena? Had she a mission? Her strivings with the Popes, her desperate longing for Church reform, her passionate yearning to see Italy and all Christendom one in the charity of Christ, her intense work for all this, seems to us to lack the essential characteristic of divine mission—namely, success! What Catherine tried to do is a work that has never been given to any woman as a mission. Whatever may be our ideas about possibilities and suitabilities, the fact remains that to teach the Church, govern the Church, or reform the Church has never been given by almighty God into the hands of a woman.

It seems to us that Catherine's work was not the work that belongs to mission: her energy seems to outrun her possibilities; and yet a so great love of the Church, a desire so intense for the peace and joy and well-being of the body of Christ, must have come from God; must have had some purpose.

If the stigmata of St Francis marked him as the mirror of Christ, perhaps St Catherine's stigmata tells us that in her, Christ sorrowed over the infidelity of his bride, suffered and prayed prayers that could not go unheard.

This sense that it was her prayers and sufferings, and not her work, that should at last bring about her great desires was with her from the time of her stigmatization, and ever increased until it culminated in the extraordinary experiences which she writes to Fr. Raimondo, and which ended in her death—the death of a broken heart.

Thus, during Mass, as she besought for the reform of holy Church, Christ spoke to her: "Sweetest my daughter, thou seest how she has soiled her face with impurity and self-love, and become swollen with the pride and avarice of those who feed at her bosom. But take thy tears and sweat, drawing them from the fountains of my divine charity, and cleanse her face. For I promise thee that her beauty shall not be restored to her by the sword, nor by cruelty or war, but by peace, and humble continual prayers, tears and sweats poured forth from the grieving desires of my servants. So thy desire shall be fulfilled in long abiding, and my providence shall in no wise fail thee."

And so perhaps she had one of those inscrutable missions that none but God can see. "Take, then, my heart, and may thy bride lean her face upon it!" she cried in one of the intensest moments of her last ecstasies. Perhaps her "long abiding" is drawing to an end. Are we to see the day of God's unfailing providence?

ST MARGARET

The woman who seems to us to have come nearest to the rôle of spiritual reformer in the Church is the English princess, St Margaret. But two things are to be noted—one, that she reformed the Church in Scotland, not the universal Church; the other, that her real mission was the reform of Malcolm, and the raising of Scotland's prestige as a Christian nation; also the bearing of children who were to be kings and queens in England and Scotland,* and have royal

* "It is in great measure owing to the virtuous education given by St Margaret to her sons that Scotland was governed for the space of 200 years by seven excellent kings—that is,

descendants even to the present day, uniting the two countries, and ensuring the blessing of peace.

Indeed, St Margaret was a very wonderful mother, and in spite of her multitudinous duties, both charitable and royal, she took the leading part in the training of her eight children. And, as if to stress the point that women must not shirk the drudgery aspect of motherhood, one of her good works during Advent and Lent was daily to feed nine orphan babies, who were brought to her at daybreak. Taking them on her knee, she would feed them with her own silver spoon.

Her effect upon Malcolm astonished good Prior Turgot, her friend and confessor, and the author of her *Life*. "I was astonished, I confess," he writes, "at this great miracle of God's mercy, when I perceived in the king such a steady earnestness in his devotion, and I wondered how it was there could exist in the heart of a man living in the world such an entire sorrow for sin. There was in him a sort of dread of offending one whose life was so venerable; for he could not but perceive from her conduct that Christ dwelt within her; nay, more, he readily obeyed her wishes and prudent counsels in all things. Whatever she refused, he refused also; whatever pleased her, he also loved for the love of her."

She insisted on pomp and ceremony, and the glory and glitter of a royal court, and on Malcolm and his

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by her three sons, Edgar, Alexander, and David; by David's two grandsons, Malcolm IV and William; and William's son and grandson, Alexander II and III; during which space the nation enjoyed greater happiness than perhaps it ever did before or after" (William Forbes-Leith, S.J.).

retinue dressing in rich stuffs and fashionable garments, instead of going in their hunting clothes, with very uncouth manners and morals to match. It was part of her policy. And having got the kingdom in hand, she was able to tackle the Church affairs and the spiritual conditions of her subjects. It was she herself who instructed the great gathering of bishops in the necessity of receiving the body and blood of Christ (Communion was becoming almost unknown), and in other matters in which the Scottish Church was at variance with the rest of Christendom. Even their Celtic obstinacy was unable to hold out against her, and the reform was effected. But the anomaly of a woman disputing with bishops in an ecclesiastical gathering was, by a little detail, prevented from appearing too incongruous, or violating St Paul's command. For Margaret could not speak Gaelic, and it was into Malcolm's ear that she spoke her eloquent pleas and logical persuasions, and he, as faithful interpreter, announced them to the bishops.

BERNADETTE

"What do you do with a broom?"

"Why, sweep with it."

"And then?"

"Put it back in its place."

"Yes. And so for me," said the child sent by God's Mother with a message to all the world, "so for me. Our Lady used me. They have put me in my corner. I am happy there, and stop there."

This was always Bernadette's attitude, whether in the difficult days of staring people and pressing questions, or in the hard days of a rather loveless

convent life, official snubs, and continuous sickness.

"When a Superior (what mania for disinterring the roots of sacred memories and scratching round the delicate fibres of private personality!) enquired 'Do you not feel tempted to vainglory, having been thus favoured by our Lady?' she answered in all sincerity that had Mary found anything still more ignorant than she was, to such an one would she have appeared. 'I was like the oxen of Betharram, who found the sacred statue. I was just *used.*'"*

One cannot help wondering whether the popular imagination has really grasped the meaning of Lourdes. Our Lord made it clear more than once that the main purpose of his miracles was to bear witness to his doctrine. He implied that it would be the same with the Apostles. And all down the ages the saints regarded their own miracles mainly in this way; while the Church regarded the miracles at the tomb of the saint as a direct witness to his sanctity—a kind of heavenly canonization.

Now probably no divine manifestation has ever been vindicated by so many signs as the apparition of our Lady at Lourdes. Indeed, people—especially those who have not been to Lourdes—are inclined to think of *healing* as the whole point of Lourdes. They take the "signs that follow" as if they were the beginning and the end of what our Lady came to do and sent Bernadette to say. In so doing they are like the multitudes to whom our Lord said sadly: "You seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled,"

* *Bernadette of Lourdes,* by Fr. C. C. Martindale, S.J.

in other words, you don't care for the *witness* of a miraculous occurrence, but only for the material benefit. But for those of us who are prepared to think, who are, indeed, searchers after truth, the magnitude of the witness at Lourdes should suggest that it was something of no small importance that our Lord had to say to his Church for the good of the world.

Like Christ's spoken words, this revelation carries more in its heart than appears at the first glance. It is necessary to meditate, to reason, to take into account each eloquent detail.

To those who thus ponder the matter, two things emerge as the points mainly insisted on by our Lady: the need of more prayer, and the realization of sin. The Rosary was a characteristic feature of the manifestation. "You must pray for sinners—penance, penance, penance," she said to Bernadette. And it was as the antithesis of human sinfulness that she appeared—"I am the Immaculate Conception."

Probably in no age has there been so little prayer in the world as there is in our own age—so little prayer even in the Church. And probably never has the sense of sin been less vivid. The continued miracles at Lourdes show that our Lady desires still to draw attention to her message, to show its divine origin.

But what has all this to do with Bernadette and her mission? Well, this. That the instrument used often helps us to understand the full significance of the mission. The outstanding characteristics of Bernadette were that she was a child; was extremely simple, the very opposite of intellectual; was especially pure of heart, and faithful to her little prayers; was

full of a simple, unquestioning *faith*, so that personal doubts never tarnished the brightness of God's gracious revelations; finally, was courageously obedient to divine inspiration. And while we notice all this about Bernadette, it gives it an added significance to remember that Mary appeared to her as *uno petito damizelo* (a little young lady)—a child, like herself.

Later, when Bernadette's life had become one long spell of sickness through which she bravely tried to work and pray, she used to say: "I *am* my job." "What is it?" someone asked in puzzlement. "Being ill," replied Bernadette.

So to us, who think of her rather in those early days at Lourdes, she might say: "I *am* my mission." Our Lady of Lourdes, the immaculate *petito damizelo*, and Bernadette, the simple child, full of untroubled faith and unquestioning obedience—are not these the blessed object-lesson that Christ our Lord wanted to give us? "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child shall not enter into it." Significant words: but do we take them seriously? Do we remember that *this* is the disposition we must have ourselves, and require of non-Catholics whom we would bring into the Church?

If Bernadette in herself reveals her own mission, her words sum up the truth concerning *all* the great men and women whose divers missions have built up the Church and taught the world—— "I was just *used*." So spoke the little girl who had not even made her First Communion. And so would have said any of the great saints whose whole selves, whose

long, full lives were spent in striving to bring about God's vast designs. Compared to omnipotence there is no difference between such a one, and little, rustic Bernadette. And yet—strange and wonderful thought—both are needed by God that he may use them in his dealings with the world. And as said the greatest of the prophets, so all say: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord. There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you knew not, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose. I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all. He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God. The Father loveth the Son: and he hath given all things into his hand."*

* John i, 23-27, and iii, 28-35.

APPENDIX

Fr. DOYLE'S BIOGRAPHY

(From *The Sower*, July, 1926).

IN our April number there appeared an article entitled "Martyrdom," which incidentally considered the marvellous thirst for suffering shown by some of the saints, and suggested that this was a characteristic of the mystics, or some mystics, rather than of those who are *de facto* destined by God to suffer martyrdom for the Faith. Taking Father William Doyle as a typical instance of such mystics, the writer suggested the further point that Fr. Doyle, after acting for some time on the principle of "inflicting as much pain on myself as I can," often in very startling and questionable ways, seemed in the final period of his life (at the Front) to have arrived at a new point of view where self-inflicted suffering pushed to extremes appeared no longer as the one thing needful. We have summarized: but the reader can consult the article itself.

Father Doyle's biographer, Professor Alfred O'Rahilly, has written to *The Sower* objecting to this interpretation of the facts in his book. The points of complaint enumerated in his letter are three:

"1. Neither Fr. Doyle nor his biographer 'draw their quotations and analogies from the lives of the actual martyrs.' Pardon me; I quoted from St Ignatius of Antioch, St Felicitas, the Deacon Sanctus, Blessed Charles Spinola. And I am prepared to

increase these quotations. Also is it not a little unreasonable to expect people to write autobiographies before martyrdom?

"2. To say that Fr. Doyle's 'deliberate programme cannot be justified on any grounds,' is a trifle sweeping, is it not? I was under the impression that the case made by me and supported by extensive references was not quite so weak as to be blown away by the unsupported *ipse dixit* of an anonymous critic.

"3. A letter written by Fr. Doyle to his sister on 19th December, 1916, is quoted to prove that Fr. Doyle changed his whole outlook on his life of voluntary reparation and suffering. This is an extraordinary misinterpretation. The whole letter (*Life*, p. 456), another letter written at the same time, and the subsequent incidents in Fr. Doyle's life, make it quite clear that he meant that his views were simply intensified and confirmed, instead of being changed. For example, he wrote on 1st February, 1917: 'Constant urging of Jesus to do hard things for him' (p. 466); and a week later: 'This is my vocation—reparation and penance for the sins of priests,' (p. 303). He also continued to the end to practise mortifications, several of which are given in his Life. Therefore when your contributor describes the Life of Fr. Doyle as 'a useful contribution to ascetical literature' because it describes his repudiation of voluntary mortification (in a casual sentence to his unastonished sister) he is conferring an undeserved honour on the book." Here endeth Professor O'Rahilly.

Our contributor's reply to these three points seriatim is as follows:-

" 1. Considering the large number of quotations from the saints, the four brief quotations from actual martyrs are so far swamped that the general impression conveyed is what I said. Moreover, in the 1921 edition of the Life (which I used in writing the article as the new edition was not out then) I can only find *two* actual martyrs quoted. Still I must apologize for saying 'entirely' and substitute 'chiefly' or, 'overwhelmingly.'

" 2. A *general* programme of always seeking suffering may no doubt be justified on mystical grounds; but the context, as well as my actual sentence, which Mr. O'Rahilly misquoted, clearly shows what I meant—that many of his particular mortifications, often done perhaps on impulse, could not be justified as a deliberate programme. It is worth noting that Fr. Doyle's letters of spiritual direction to others are very 'sound,' and often deprecate people attempting anything out of the ordinary in the way of mortification. We feel he would be the last to wish these records to be put into the hands of young people, novices, converts, non-Catholics; that they are most certainly *not his teaching*, and sometimes not even his own considered reflections, but merely the impetuous outpourings of an abnormally fluent writer meditating fervently with a pen in his hand.

" 3. This objection raises a very interesting point indeed: but the point is connected with very fine shades of perception, of a delicate reorientation of a great and finely-balanced soul; of a dimly-perceived sense of new values scarcely as yet worked out in explicit thought and word: *not*, most certainly, anything so crude and impossible as a 'repudiation of voluntary

mortification.' I quite honestly feel that what I am now going to say is *fairer* to the holy priest and heroic soldier, Fr. Doyle, than all the efforts of his biographer to justify in theory his strange forms of mortification.

"During Fr. Doyle's Long Retreat occurs the following:

'I have now reached the great meditation, the crucial point of the retreat. . . . God is asking from me the practice of the Third Degree. . . . I promise you, sweet Jesus, to serve you faithfully with all the fervour of my soul, aiming at the Third Degree in its perfection.' Then follow careful notes concerning the Third Degree, in which occurs this: 'Father Petit told me that the spirit of the Third Degree is not so much the practice of austerities as the denial of one's will and judgement, and perfect abnegation of self, and humility. This is the spirit of our rules which are simply the third degree.'

"Fr. Petit was an extremely holy old father who directed Father Doyle at this time, and whom he believed in very heartily. He was—as Fr. Doyle clearly perceived at the time—faithfully explaining St Ignatius' ideas. The definition of the Third Degree given in the *Spiritual Exercises*, is quoted as follows, in Fr. Doyle's Life: 'The third degree is the most perfect humility; when . . . the better to imitate Christ Our Lord and to become actually more like him, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than riches, contempt with Christ contemned rather than honours.' And in another place St Ignatius' words are quoted, where he says we must follow our Leader 'in the highest degree of poverty

of spirit, and not less in actual poverty if it please His divine Majesty,' even 'in bearing reproaches and insults, the better to imitate Him in these,' (note, 'if it please,' and 'bearing': both indicating providentially sent circumstances rather than self-inflicted mortifications). And it is here that one of the quotations from the martyrs occurs: 'We suffer, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only Teacher' (St Ignatius of Antioch)—and he is writing in the days of the early martyrs, and before the days of mediæval or even Desert mortification.

"Surely at this time, listening to his holy old director, standing on the firm rock of the Exercises and the Gospels, Fr. Doyle was *right:* and it is this attitude he teaches his own penitents, later. What he *did* was something quite different: and if we must be so hardhearted as to analyze it all, we must admit that some of it bordered on the ridiculous—for instance, making himself seriously ill by walking naked in nettles, in the middle of a retreat, so that the good nuns believed that he had swallowed external liniment by accident.

"Then came life at the Front, and his spiritual self-revelations become more and more restricted, until they are positively rare, so that the few we have are significant. And it may certainly be claimed that they do reveal a return to the golden age of his spiritual life—that second week in his Long Retreat. That he himself was conscious of something very definite having happened to his spiritual outlook is obvious all through that letter to his sister, and the previous one. And here is a remark too emphatic to be explained away: 'I am slowly learning the lesson

Jesus brought me out here to teach me. The first and greatest is that I must have no will of my own, only His, and this in all things. It is hard to let everyone walk on you, even your own servant; but Jesus asks this and I try to let Him arrange all as he pleases. Result: yesterday I got no dinner . . .' (October 26th). He has rediscovered the Third Degree!

"He is filled with admiration at finding this very spirit in his men. After a description of days and nights of incredible danger and suffering, occurs the following: 'It was nearly eight o'clock and our dinner was simmering in the pot with a tempting odour, when the fatal telegram came: 'the battalion will move forward in support at once. . . .' I did not hear a single growl from anyone, though it meant we had to set out for another march hungry and dinnerless, with the prospect of passing a second night without sleep. When I give my next retreat I think I shall try the experiment of a few supperless and bedless nights on them, just to see what they would say, and compare notes with the soldiers.'

"Quite early on he had discovered another motive for chosen suffering: 'The officers, from captain up, have horses; but I prefer to shoulder my pack and foot it with the boys, for I know they like it, and besides I don't see why I should not share a little of their hardship.' 'Incidentally,' (adds his biographer) 'we learn that he had been carrying a young lad's equipment in addition to his own; all day, too, without dinner or supper.' This must be the sort of thing St Thomas Aquinas has in mind when he says, 'The sufferings of the saints are beneficial to the Church, as by way, not of redemption, but of example

and exhortation'—'whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation,' (*Summa* III., Q. XLVIII, art. 5, *ad* 3m).

"A very curious point about Father Doyle's change of attitude, is that he seems to have shifted the emphasis from the question of *his own sanctification* to the question of external *work to be done*. To his father he writes: 'I have the conviction, growing stronger every day, that nothing serious will befall me. . . . Otherwise why should He impress so strongly on my mind that this 'novitiate' out here is only the preparation for my real life's work? . . .' To his sister—'I feel that all this [hardship] is a preparation for the future, and that God is labouring in my soul for ends I do not clearly see as yet. . . .' (And see the bits given in the April article).

"And this premonition of future work for which this present agony is 'spiritual training,' sets one speculating. For after another year of fidelity and courage in doing the same work as so many other brave priests, and sharing the same 'hell' in which millions of men, good and bad, were plunged, he was killed, as many another man was killed, ministering to a wounded comrade. Was it, perhaps, the same 'work' which the Little Flower felt convinced our Lord would let her do from heaven? She felt very strongly about it; she could not bear the idea of going to eternal *rest*. And this idea of 'training'—was it a little revelation that the work of heaven is reserved for the 'heroic' on earth?"

Here endeth our contributor; and I do not think I need pronounce any concluding benediction on the

controversy or any lengthy summing up, more especially because I cannot claim to have read the Professor's book. One thing ought to be said perhaps, and that is that no *Sower* writer, past, present or to come, has ever dreamed or ever will dream of denying the need for ordinary bodily penance and self-denial; such things belong to Catholicism, and this journal, which is written for Catholics and for Catholics alone, takes them for granted. The only question under discussion in that part of the April article was the question of extreme and abnormal practices of self-inflicted pain, such as would be vetoed immediately by ninety-nine or more confessors out of a hundred.

People use words so carelessly; self-denial, sacrifice, mortification, austerities, penance, detachment, contradictions, patience, abandonment, victim —such words are often sprinkled about as if they were interchangeable, whereas they stand for different ideas and aspects and motives; and moreover, each may be applied in different spheres (*e.g.*, body, intellect, feelings, exterior life, etc.); and again, in each case the "hard things" may be willed or caused in different ways (*e.g.*, specially *invented*, or *sought* indirectly, or just *welcomed* gladly and not avoided). All these varying complications and permutations have to be held in mind. If I may venture to isolate the real question at issue between Professor O'Rahilly and our contributor, it seems to be this: *Which kinds* of willed suffering can fittingly be pushed to extraordinary or unlimited lengths, and held up in that way as ideals to Catholics in general?

Professor O'Rahilly seems to lay stress on the

motive of reparation, that is (I suppose) vicarious penance; this is, of course, a permanent Catholic idea ever since the days of the early martyrs, who offered up their sufferings on behalf of the weaker Christians who lapsed. But I cannot see that reparation as a motive has any bearing on the question of *ways and means* in suffering, or that it makes prudent what is otherwise imprudent; every decent Catholic wants to make reparation for sinners, but there are plenty of ways of doing this, even heroic and painful ways, works of charity and acts of renunciation and so on, without necessarily having recourse to bloody self-macerations or anything of that kind. The introduction of the motive of reparation makes no difference to the practical problem before us; and talking about the early martyrs, who certainly had the idea of reparation strongly, it is notable that tendencies to *seek* martyrdom *did* show themselves, but were rejected by Christen common sense and the authority of the Church, and came to be regarded as a mark of fanaticism and unorthodoxy.

The reparation-motive would of course tend to make willed suffering pass beyond the necessities of mere asceticism, nor can any limits reasonably be set to its application as a motive; but reparation or no reparation, the question still remains: *Which kinds* of willed suffering are fittingly to be carried to extraordinary lengths? One may easily excogitate illustrations; for instance, we venerate St Francis all the more for his stigmata and all that they imply; but would it be praiseworthy or pleasing to God if, in order to share our Lord's sufferings, we drove nails

into our hands and feet? Or even prayed to receive similar stigmata?

In this discussion, it seems to me, one must keep in sight a practical point; namely, that there are (thank God) dozens and hundreds of Catholic men and women who would cheerfully do such things without a moment's hesitation if they really thought God was asking it of them. Heroic love and generosity are not so rare, after all, especially in these days of frequent Communion. And to spiritual writers and theologians such as Professor O'Rahilly, I suggest that it is a matter of importance to indicate the normal everyday unmistakably sane sort of ways in which such heroism may live and spend itself. For all I know, he has done so already in some part of his writings; but I am afraid he must have misplaced the emphasis somehow.

Here endeth even the Editor of *The Sower*. In conclusion, I think it would be difficult in these matters to improve upon the following sentence of the Editor of *The Month* in one of its recent issues: "We are not called upon to imitate or even to admire all that the Saints did in this particular. . . . There have been saints who were not conspicuous for bodily mortification, which is but a means to an end, but no saint who has not, by one means or another, brought both body and soul into entire subjection to God's good pleasure." *Causa finita est!*

EDITOR, *The Sower*.

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